

STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS WITH THE STARS WHO PLAY THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE LEGENDARY PAIR OF HAN SOLO & CHEWIE!

JEDI JEDI ABRAMS WE TRACK THE CAREER OF THE MAN CHOSEN TO REAWAKEN THE FORCE **DEADPOOL** DIRECTOR TIM MILLER DISHES UP MORE ABOUT THE COMIC ANTI-HERO **THE 5TH WAVE** CHLOE MORETZ & NICK ROBINSON BRACE FOR IMPACT **THE DANISH GIRL** DIRECTOR TOM HOOPER TALKS ABOUT THE TRANSITION **AND MORE...**

EXCLUSIVE **THE HUNTSMAN: WINTER'S WAR** + **DISNEY'S THE JUNGLE BOOK** GIANT POSTERS INSIDE!

ISSUE 71/72




STAR WARS
THE FORCE AWAKENS
IN CINEMAS DEC 17
IN 3D, REAL D 3D AND IMAX 3D
StarWarsSG
Rating To Be Advised
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No matter how much we know about films, one should never boast about knowing everything – especially when it comes to *Star Wars!*

Because there's always *another* bigger geek out there... Like what they say about beautiful women, or men, or cute animals.

So, judge not what you're about to read, my dear padawans.

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away… I literally found myself in another world when my parents brought my elder brother and I, at the ripe young age of seven, to watch *Star Wars* (yes, the 1977 one which was later retitled *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope*). I remembered liking Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia, R2D2, C3P0, Darth Vader and Chewbacca. Yes, the list is in order, and no, I wasn't very fond of Han Solo then!

Here's why. My irritating elder brother went on to catch the next two installments before me, and he did the most wonderful thing in the world – he told me THE three ultimate spoilers: Luke and Leia are siblings; Darth Vader goes all "I'm your father"; and Leia and Han end up together. I was so angry, with him and Han…

Of course, I eventually saw the rest of the trilogy, and went on to stress my mum out enough to buy me the figurines of my favourite characters – one at a time, over a period of time, in my preferred order. I forgave Han Solo, and he was added to my collection to accompany Chewie. I no longer have the toys; the buyer threw them out after a few years thinking that I had grown out of them. Yes, I was angry with her for a while too.

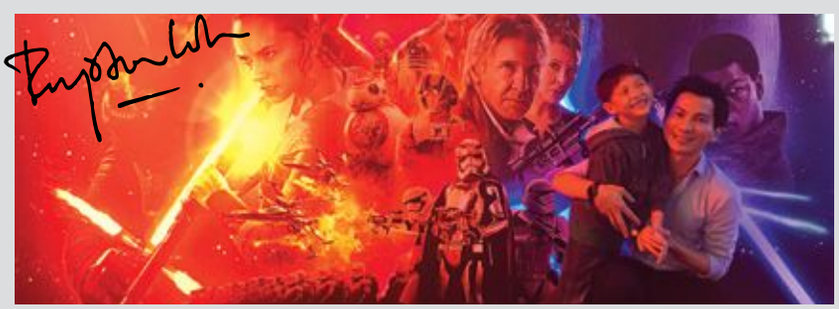
Then, a not so long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away… I found myself back in that world again with my brother, about to watch the fourth *Star Wars* film (1999's *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace*). It was not so great, but okay. I remembered not minding the young Anakin Skywalker, Darth Maul, Queen Amidala, adult Anakin and Obi Wan; but hating to the core Mace Windu and, of course, Jar Jar Binks. Yes, the lists are again in order.

I remembered excitedly buying the young Anakin Skywalker mini-figurine and his Pod-Racer, and the cool yellow Naboo Plane before watching *Episode I*. But I stopped pestering myself to buy any more after the lukewarm feeling I got from the rest of the second trilogy. I still have those toys with me, but I guess I won't be too angry if Mum *accidentally* throws them out again.

Well, after some major movements in the Force, the stars are aligned again for a much-hyped third trilogy. *Star Wars VII: The Force Awakens* is upon us – let's hope we'll be back in the world of *A New Hope*. I'll definitely be watching this with my like-minded 8-year-old nephew, who always insists on listing, in order, his favourite characters after every movie; and, most importantly, with his father – yes, that irritating spoiler-happy brother of mine!

May the force be with you!

Royston Loh
Editor-in-Chief





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F*** is published by Sterne & Lears Global Pte Ltd
71 Ayer Rajah Crescent, #07-18. Singapore 139951
Email : f@sterne-lears.com
Company Registration No : 200923639Z
MICA No: MICA (P) 114/01/2010

Distributed by Circulation Department,
Singapore Press Holdings.
Printed by Toppan Security Printing Pte. Ltd.
Press No: L017/10/2009

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02 Forword

S&M 06
Stars & Madhatters

08 NEWS & EVENTS
20 INKED STAR OF THE MONTH
22 EVENTS
24 FIRST LOOK

WTF 30
We Talk Films

32 STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS
34 - Adam Driver
38 - Daisy Ridley
44 - Harrison Ford
48 - Peter Mayhew
52 - J. J. Abrams
56 DEADPOOL - Director Tim Miller
60 THE 5TH WAVE - Nick Robinson
64 THE 5TH WAVE - Chloe Moretz
68 THE DANISH GIRL - Director Tom Hooper

R(A) 72
Reviews Anonymous

73 BONE TOMAHAWK
74 BY THE SEA
75 IN THE HEART OF THE SEA
76 KRAMPUS
77 LOVE THE COOPERS
78 MR. UNBELIEVABLE
79 POINT BREAK
80 REGRESSION
81 SNOOPY AND CHARLIE BROWN: THE PEANUTS MOVIE
82 CAROL
84 ALSO OPENING THIS MONTH
86 MAZE RUNNER: THE SCORCH TRIALS - Kaya Scodelario
88 SUBSCRIPTION/PROMO
90 BACK ISSUES
92 LUST PAGE



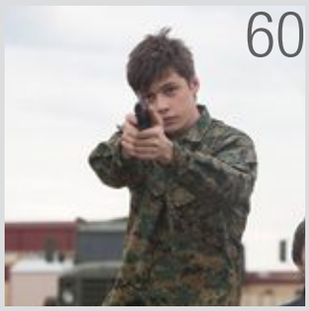




















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*** S&M

STARS & MADHATTERS

Li Bingbing enters the Realm Pom Klementieff goes green for Guardians 2 **Neill Blomkamp finds The Gone World** Mark Wahlberg becomes Mark Wahl-borg for The 6 Billion Dollar Man **Terminally-ill Star Wars fan granted final wish** Alicia Vikander gets caught in the Spider's Web **Chloë Moretz dives under the sea for The Little Mermaid** Pilou Asbæk steps into Section 9 in Ghost in the Shell **Spectre director Sam Mendes done with Bond** Jonathan Rhys Meyers to film movie in Singapore **Fast and Furious drifts into the spinoff lane** Scott Eastwood stays up late for Live By Night **Ryan Gosling is Sylvester Stallone's pick for the next Rambo** Doug Liman gets charged up for Gambit **Alexandra Daddario gets her slow-mo jog on for Baywatch** John Malkovich and Robert Rodriguez make movie, lock it away for 100 years **Cate Blanchett goes missing in Where'd You Go, Bernadette** Angelina Jolie to marry the monster as the Bride of Frankenstein? **That Girl goes feature-length and Ah Boys go fourth**

Plus First Look At:
Wonder Woman Zoolander 2 **The Huntsman: Winter's War**
And More…

GET MAD

FIRST LOOK: THE MADHATTER IS BACK IN ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS



Pom Klementieff goes green for *Guardians 2*

Pom Klementieff has been cast in *Guardians Of The Galaxy Vol. 2*, and while Marvel initially didn't reveal who she would be playing, most fans speculated that Klementieff had been cast as Mantis. Turns out they're right. In the comics, Mantis is the half-Vietnamese, half-German daughter of the anti-hero Libra, who is raised by an alien sect in a Vietnamese temple to become a warrior goddess. In addition to being a martial-arts expert, Mantis' special abilities include telepathy, awareness of the emotions of others in the form of psychic 'vibrations', astral projection, chlorokinesis (power over plants), pyrokinesis (power over fire), precognition and self-healing. That's quite the bag of tricks! Mantis' back-story is pretty convoluted, so it's likely that director James Gunn will have to simplify it, as he did for Drax The Destroyer in the first film. Klementieff's best-known role is in Spike Lee's remake of *Oldboy*, which also featured MCU cast members Josh Brolin (Thanos), Elizabeth Olsen (Scarlet Witch) and Samuel L. Jackson (Nick Fury). Our lovable gang of space-faring rascals will return in May 2017.



Neill Blomkamp's *Alien* movie put on hold



The bug hunt's been called off – though just temporarily, we hope! Director Neill Blomkamp delivered the bad news over Twitter, saying that his planned *movie in the Alien franchise* is "kinda holding/pending *Prometheus 2*". He added that he would be working on other projects in the interim. It isn't surprising that *Alien: Covenant,* the follow-up to *Prometheus, is* taking priority for Fox over Blomkamp's *Alien* project, but the news is disappointing, especially given the 'promoted fanboy' element to the story of how Blomkamp got the gig. Earlier this year, Blomkamp uploaded some unofficial *Alien* concept art to Instagram. It wasn't long before Blomkamp was officially given the directing gig on the film that would supposedly take place after *Aliens*, ignoring the events of *Alien*[3] and *Alien Resurrection*. Sigourney Weaver, whom Blomkamp had directed in *Chappie*, signed on to reprise the iconic role of Ellen Ripley, and Blomkamp even shared a photo of a redesigned pulse rifle in October, indicating that pre-production was underway. There has been speculation that Ridley Scott plans to include more overt references to *Alien* and Ripley herself in *Alien: Covenant*, so the status of Blomkamp's project will be contingent on how that fares.



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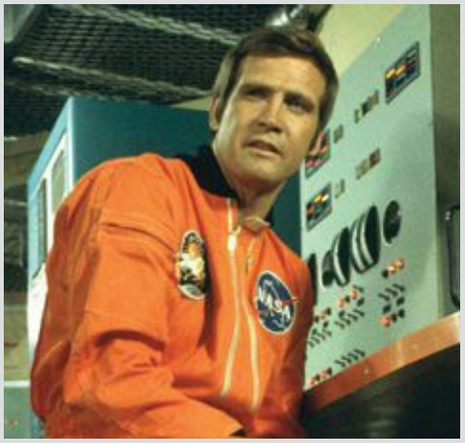
Neill Blomkamp finds *The Gone World*

But hey, all is not lost! While fans wait and see what becomes of Blomkamp's *Alien* movie, he has wasted no time in moving on to his next project: *The Gone World*, a sci-fi film based on the soon-to-be-released novel by Thomas Sweterlitsch, author of *Tomorrow And Tomorrow*. Author Stewart O'Nan has called *Tomorrow And Tomorrow* "a wild mash-up of Raymond Chandler, Philip K. Dick and William S. Burroughs". *The Gone World* has been described as a "sci-fi time-travel procedural", though no details beyond that are available. No doubt keen to keep Blomkamp occupied before *he can dive into the Alien franchise, Fox* has tapped Blomkamp to write and direct the film.





Mark Wahlberg becomes Mark Wahlborg for *The 6 Billion Dollar Man*



Inflation is no joke, kids. After circling a big-screen reboot of '70s TV show *The 6 Million Dollar Man* for a while, Mark Wahlberg has confirmed that he will be playing the lead role of Steve Austin (no relation to the wrestler), originally portrayed by Lee Majors. Damián Szifron, who directed *Wild Tales*, will write and direct the film, which will be adding three more zeroes to that $6 million figure. Peter Berg, who directed Wahlberg in *Lone Survivor*, was originally attached to direct. The TV show was based on Martin Caidin's novel *Cyborg*, in which a military officer is drafted into a top-secret government experimentation programme after a horrific accident leaves him on the brink of death. He is given cutting-edge cybernetic enhancements and transformed into a one-man/machine army. There have been multiple failed attempts to make a *6 Million Dollar Man* movie, including a comedic take that would have starred Jim Carrey. Marky Mark will go full-on Marky Mech in December 2017.

That Girl goes feature-length as *Ah Boys* goes fourth



At the 2015 Asia TV Forum and Market, director Jack Neo announced two upcoming film projects. *That Girl*, Neo's contribution to the critically acclaimed anthology film *7 Letters*, will be expanded into a feature-length film. A bittersweet tale of young love in a *kampung* (village) setting, Neo said of *That Girl*, "This is my memory lane; I think I should bring everyone back to the times of my idols", referring to '70s Chinese romantic-drama stars Lin Ching-Hsia, Lin Feng-jiao, Chin Han and Charlie Chin.

Meanwhile, the *Ah Boys To Men* military comedy series has proven lucrative, if not particularly successful with critics, so it's no surprise that a new installment is in the works. "You can rest assured that the story will not be similar to the past three movies," Neo claimed, emphasising that the main concern is a "strong story". Most of the cast from *Ah Boys To Men 3: Frogmen* are expected to return. Neo announced that he is courting Taiwanese actor Darren Wang, star of *Our Times*, for the film, citing the similarities between Singapore and Taiwan's practice of conscripted military service.

That Girl will be released during Chinese New Year in 2017, with *Ah Boys To Men 4* likely to follow in 2018.



26th Singapore International Film Festival (SGIFF) rolls out the red carpet

Photos by Foo Yong Koon, 26th SGIFF

SGIFF, the longest-running international film platform of Southeast Asia, had another successful run presenting almost 150 feature and short films from 51 countries. It also played host to a bevy of celebrities and filmmakers and involved attendees in an addictive mix of films, talks and after-parties. As one of the official partners, F*** is proud to support SGIFF in its mission to connect industry players and festival goers, and foster greater appreciation towards independent cinema.



Panay - Producer Hsieh Chun-yao, Directors Cheng Yu-chieh and Lekal Sumi, cast – Kaco Lekal, Rahic Gulas, Dongi Kacaw, Ado' Kaliting Pacidal, Bokeh Kosang, and singer/composer Suming *The Laundryman* - Sonia Sui Tang, director Lee Chung and Yeo Yann Yann



Bugis Street Redux - Ernest Seah, Matthew Foo, Maria J and Hiep Thi Le



Mohsen Makhmalbaf, recipient of Silver Screen Honorary Award, with presenter Yuni Hadi



Michelle Yeoh, recipient of Silver Screen Cinema Legend Award with presenters Terence Chang and Zoe Tay



In The Room - Nansun Shi, Josie Ho and Eric Khoo



The Laundryman - Sonia Sui Tang, director Lee Chung and Yeo Yann Yann



The Man Who Knew Infinity - Dev Patel and director Matthew Brown



Pilou Asbæk steps into Section 9 in *Ghost In The Shell*

Production on the live-action *Ghost In The Shell* movie hasn't even begun, but the film has already generated its share of negative publicity – most notably by casting Scarlett Johansson as Major Motoko Kusanagi, the popular *manga's* Japanese main character. Nonetheless, casting for other key roles is underway. Pilou Asbæk will be portraying the hulking and imposing Batou, the best fighter in his Japanese National Public Safety Commission covert ops unit. Asbæk previously appeared alongside Johansson in *Lucy*. Audiences outside of Asbæk's native Denmark will become a lot more familiar with him very soon: he will be playing Pontius Pilate in the upcoming remake of *Ben-Hur* and has been cast in the sixth season of *Game Of Thrones* as Euron Greyjoy. Rupert Sanders (*Snow White And The Huntsman*) is attached to direct and Sam Riley (*Maleficent*) has been cast in a villainous role.

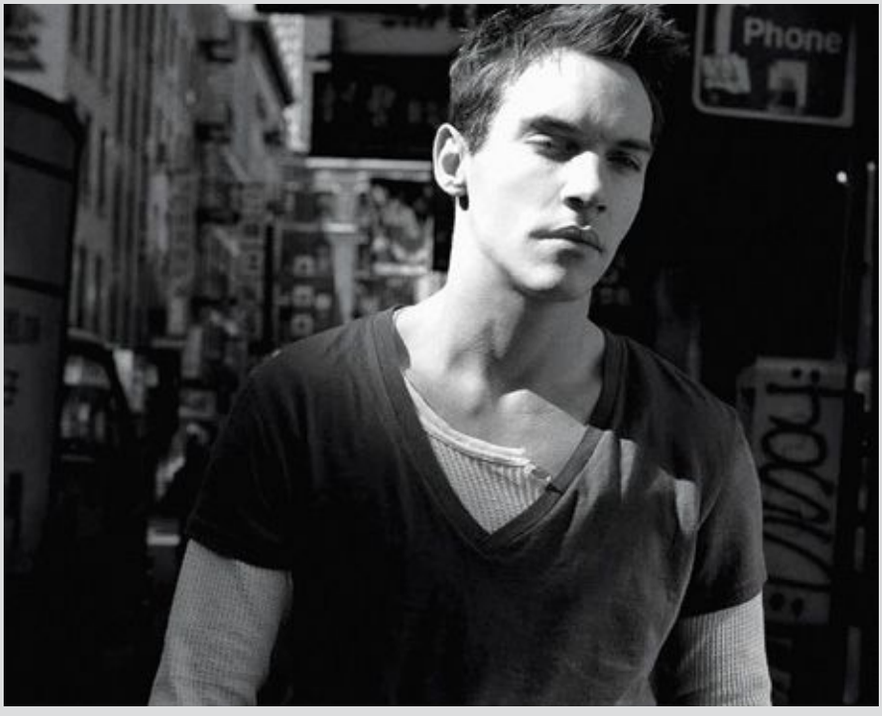
Terminally-ill *Star Wars* fan granted final wish



The late Daniel Fleetwood, a *Star Wars* fan since the age of 8, was granted his dying wish and got to watch *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* early. Fleetwood had late-stage spindle cell carcinoma and passed away on 10 November 2015 at age 32. Doctors had given him two months to live in July. Together with his college sweetheart and wife of five years, Ashley, Fleetwood started the #ForceForDaniel hashtag in the hopes that he would get to see the film before he passed on. The online petition quickly gained traction, garnering the endorsement of *Star Wars* actors Mark Hamill (Luke Skywalker), John Boyega (Finn) and Peter Mayhew (Chewbacca).

Director J. J. Abrams, Disney and Lucasfilm helped Fleetwood check this colossal item off his bucket list. They made his final dream come true with a private screening of an unfinished print of the film. Abrams had earlier given dying *Star Trek* fan Daniel Craft an early screening of *Star Trek Into Darkness* in 2013. This heart-warming true story is reminiscent of the plot of *Fanboys*, in which a group of *Star Wars* fans break into George Lucas' Skywalker Ranch in order to steal a print of *The Phantom Menace* so that their cancer-stricken friend can watch the film before he dies.





Jonathan Rhys Meyers to shoot movie in Singapore

Irish actor Jonathan Rhys Meyers is starring in survival drama *Shambhala*, which will shoot in Singapore early next year. The film is billed as "an emotional story of enlightenment and redemption" and is about a lone plane-crash survivor who has to make sense of a past he can't remember after his plane goes down in the mountains of the Hindu Kush. He is haunted by memories in which he is a professor teaching in Singapore. Singaporean locations for the film will include the National University of Singapore and a black-and-white bungalow. The film is produced by Singapore/Australian-based production company Xeitgeist Entertainment Group and Singapore/Japan-based Marcys Holdings. The cast also includes Devika Bhise, Pallavi Sharda, Allan Wu, Kabir Singh and Akshay Kumar. Rhys Meyers will next appear in espionage thriller *The Damascus Cover*, also producted by Xeitgeist.



Alicia Vikander gets caught in The *Spider's Web*

For a good while, a sequel to 2011's *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*, the English-language adaptation of the first book in Stieg Larsson's bestselling *Millennium* series, was up in the air. Instead of following that film up with adaptations of *The Girl Who Played With Fire* and *The Girl Who Kicked The Hornet's Nest*, as expected, Sony is going the reboot route with *The Girl In The Spider's Web*. The continuation of the late Larsson's series was written by author and crime journalist David Lagencrantz. Replacing Rooney Mara in the lead role of Lisbeth Salander is Alicia Vikander, who, like the character, is Swedish. David Fincher will not be returning to direct. No word yet on who is replacing Daniel Craig as Mikael Blomkvist. Steven Knight is being tapped to write the screenplay.

Li Bingbing enters the *Realm*

Fan Bingbing played Blink in *X-Men: Days Of Future Past*, and now Li Bingbing will star as an original superheroine in the upcoming film, *Realm*, straight out of the mind of Stan Lee. "What a kick it has been to create our first Chinese female superhero, and an empowering one at that," the Marvel maven said in a statement. "It has been such a fun experience bringing to life an international woman character, and the ability to do so has been different from anything we've ever done!" Plot details are being kept under wraps, and *Realm* is not expected to have any overt connections to the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU). Alex Litvak (*Predators*) is writing the screenplay, and the film will be co-produced by Stan Lee Global Entertainment and China's Fundamental Films.





Sam Mendes breaks up with James Bond

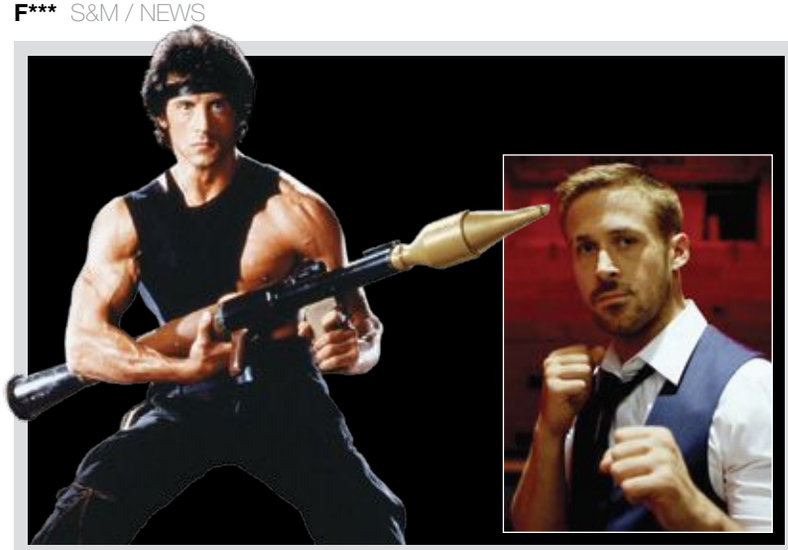
Other than "Will Daniel Craig be returning?", one of the most-asked questions leading up to and following the release of *Spectre* was: "Will director Sam Mendes be back?" The Oscar-winner has officially confirmed that he is bidding farewell to the long-running film series after helming *Skyfall* and *Spectre*. "There is a sense of completeness that wasn't there at the end of *Skyfall*, and that's what makes this feel different. It feels like there's a rightness to it, that I have finished a journey," Mendes told *Deadline*. Mendes also clarified that, even though Craig has repeatedly hinted that he's had enough of *Bond* himself, it's doesn't mean he's out. "Daniel leaves everything on the field. Every piece of him is out there and he's so spent when he's finished that it's obviously the wrong time to ask, the day after he's finished, which is what happened," he explained. Additionally, Mendes cited directors like Billy Wilder and Ang Lee as filmmakers who have experimented in vastly different genres and took risks trying different things.



Fast And Furious drifts into the spin-off lane

With a franchise as lucrative as *Fast And Furious*, it's only natural that a studio would want to expand its reach – never mind that there are already seven films and likely three more in the works. *Star Wars* is doing it, the *Transformers* series is following suit, and now there will be *Fast And Furious* spin-off movies to complement the main series of films. "We've written out storylines for various characters," star/producer Vin Diesel said. "We've been playing with it for a long time. It's a very rich property and we're committed to treating it with a lot of class." While it hasn't been revealed which characters are planned to head the spin-off films, Dwayne Johnson has hinted in the past that a movie focusing on his character, Diplomatic Security Service agent Luke Hobbs, is a possibility.





Stallone picks Gosling to be the next Rambo

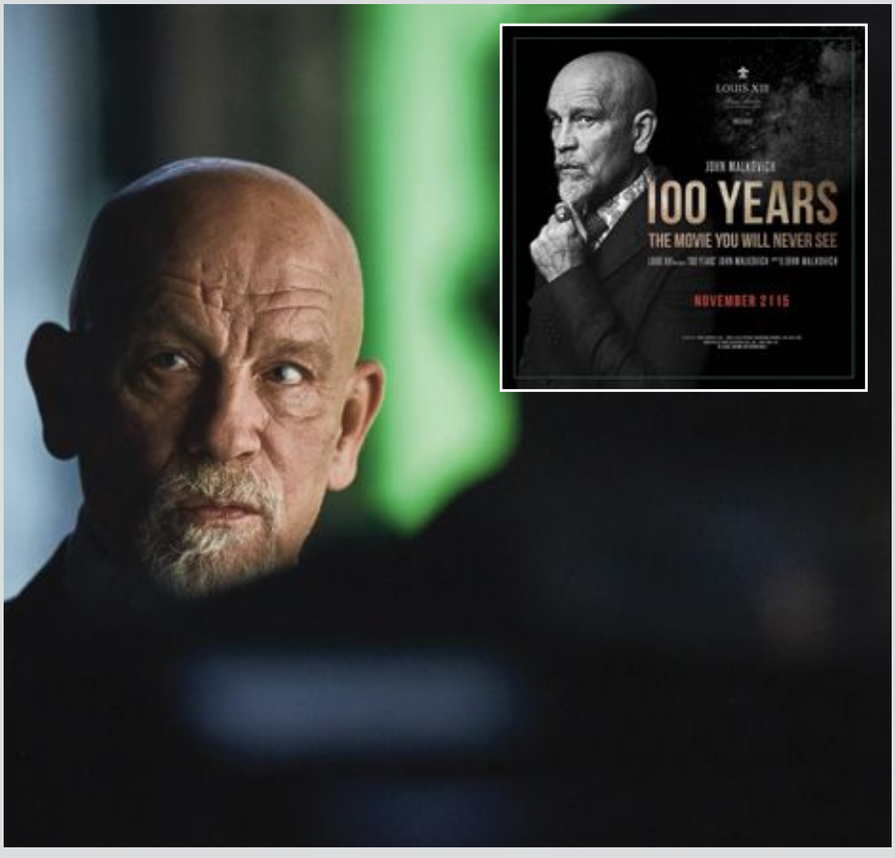
While promoting *Rocky* spin-off *Creed*, the following question was posed to Sylvester Stallone: who would you pass the torch on to should a younger actor play Rambo? Stallone answered, "Ryan Gosling", admitting that it's "kind of an odd choice". Stallone posted this snippet of the interview on his Twitter account, implying that he's standing by his selection.

When Gosling was informed of what Stallone said, Gosling reacted in disbelief. "That is incredible, he's one of my favourite actors. Just the fact that he knows my name is exciting… I'm genuinely touched that he said that," Gosling said. Currently, there aren't any plans to reboot the *Rambo* franchise but, given Hollywood's current predilection for reboots, that can't be too far away.

Doug Liman gets charged up for *Gambit*

Gambit, Channing Tatum's *X-Men* spin-off movie, has found its director in Doug Liman. The *Edge Of Tomorrow* helmer is replacing Rupert Wyatt (*Rise Of The Planet Of The Apes*), who was earlier attached to *Gambit* but dropped out. Other names in contention included Joe Cornish (*Attack The Block*) and Shane Black (*Iron Man 3*). Fans are eagerly awaiting the solo film starring the popular mutant, especially after Tatum revealed that Gambit would not be appearing in *X-Men: Apocalypse* after all. Joshua Zetumer (the *Robocop* remake) is writing a script based on a treatment by iconic *X-Men* comics writer and Gambit co-creator Chris Claremont. The suave Cajun-accented mutant, who has the power to manipulate kinetic energy and uses a bo staff and a deck of cards as weapons, earlier appeared in *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*, portrayed by Taylor Kitsch.





John Malkovich and Robert Rodriguez make movie, lock it away for 100 years

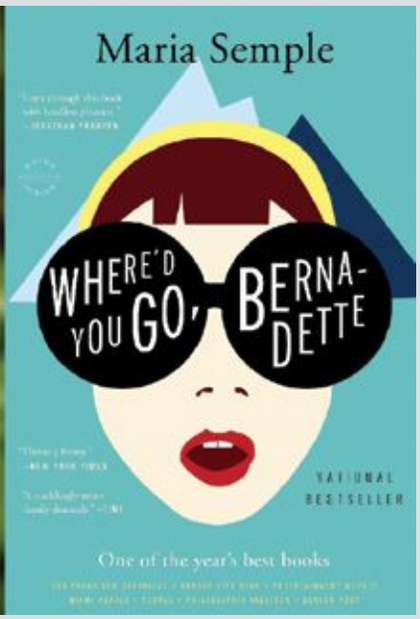
If you thought waiting 29 years for the latest *Mad Max* movie was a long wait, just listen to this: Robert Rodriguez and John Malkovich have collaborated on a movie that will be sealed in a vault, which will only be opened on 18 November 2115. The mysterious movie, titled *100 Years* and billed as "the movie you will never see", is part of a promotion for Louis XIII cognac, a premium luxury liquor that is aged for a century. "Louis XIII is a true testament to the mastery of time and we sought to create a proactive piece of art that explores the dynamic relationship of the past, present and future," Ludovic du Plessis, global executive director of Louis XIII, said in a press release. Malkovich and Shuya Chang starred in three teaser trailers/commercials for the cognac, each imagining a different version of what life would be like 100 years in the future: a post-apocalyptic vision of a world reclaimed by nature; a super high-tech cyber cityscape; and a retro-futuristic iteration inspired by '40s and '50s sci-fi. Details on the actual film, written by Malkovich and directed by Rodriguez, are being kept secret.

Alexandra Daddario gets her slow-mo jog on for *Baywatch*

The big-screen adaptation of '90s TV show *Baywatch* has snagged its female lead: the bodacious Alexandra Daddario. Daddario will be playing Summer, the lifeguard love interest of Zac Efron's character. Dwayne Johnson will also star. This reunites Daddario and Johnson, who played father and daughter in *San Andreas*. "Extremely excited. Been practicing my slow-mo run all morning," Daddario tweeted. Daddario beat out the likes of Ashley Benson, Alexandra Shipp, Shelley Hennig and Nina Dobrev, who were reportedly vying for the role of Summer, played by Nicole Eggert in the TV show. Johnson has teased that the announcement of who will be playing C.J., originally portrayed by Pamela Anderson, will be forthcoming. Seth Gordon (*Horrible Bosses*) is directing the action comedy.







Cate Blanchett goes missing in *Where'd You Go, Bernadette*

Oscar winner Cate Blanchett will be starring in director Richard Linklater's comedy-drama *Where'd You Go, Bernadette*, adapted from the novel by Maria Semple. Blanchett will play the title character of Bernadette Fox, a former architect who suffers from agoraphobia – the irrational fear of public places. Her daughter, Bee, has long hoped to make a family trip to Antarctica but, while engrossed in the planning of this vacation, Bernadette suddenly disappears. To find her mother, Bee rummages through old documents and emails – unearthing Bernadette's troubled past. Scott Neustadter and Michael H. Weber, screenwriters of *(500) Days Of Summer* and *The Fault In Our Stars*, are penning the screenplay.

Angelina Jolie to marry the monster as the Bride of Frankenstein?

Universal is eying none other than Angelina Jolie to portray the Bride of Frankenstein('s Monster), the iconic creature's better half. The studio wants Jolie to headline a film that will be part of the Universal Monsters shared cinematic universe, which kicked off with *Dracula Untold* and is set to include new versions of the Mummy and the Wolfman. According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, Universal financed *By The Sea*, which Jolie directed, produced and starred in, in the hopes that she would be more inclined to star in big tent-pole movies for the studio. *By The Sea* was a critical and commercial flop, so it stands to reason that Universal would want to recoup their losses by roping in Jolie to star in more crowd-pleasing mainstream films. Also on the studio's wishlist is a sequel to *Wanted*. The Bride of Frankenstein was memorably portrayed by Elsa Lanchester in the 1935 film of the same name.





Chloë Moretz dives under the sea for *The Little Mermaid*

Chloë Moretz will go from *The 5th Wave* to frolicking beneath the waves in the live-action take on *The Little Mermaid* for Universal Pictures. The film will be an adaptation of the original Hans Christian Andersen tale and is unrelated to the popular animated Disney cartoon. 'Ariel' is the name given to the character in the Disney cartoon, so we'll have to wait and see what this version of the Little Mermaid is christened. Sofia Coppola was initially attached to the project, but left after "creative differences" with the studio. Richard Curtis, of *Four Weddings And A Funeral* and *Love Actually* fame, is writing the script.



Scott Eastwood stays up late for *Live By Night*

Period crime drama *Live By Night*, based on the novel by Denis Lehane and to be directed by Ben Affleck, has added Scott Eastwood to its cast. The story follows Joe Coughlin, the prodigal son of a cop, as he rises through the criminal ranks as a bootlegger and gangster during the Prohibition era in Ybor City, Florida. In addition to directing, Affleck is playing Coughlin, with Eastwood taking on the role of his brother. The film's cast also includes Chris Messina, Sienna Miller, Zoe Saldana, Elle Fanning, Max Casella and Chris Cooper. Affleck's directorial debut, *Gone Baby Gone*, was also an adaptation of a Lehane book. *Live By Night* is expected to be released sometime in 2017.







INKED STAR of the Month

Tom Hardy

By Dennis Yeo

Tom Hardy, last seen in *Mad Max: Fury Road* and double duty in *Legend*, got his first tattoo at the tender age of 15. He hasn't looked back since. The leprechaun that adorns his outer right bicep – a nod to his own Irish heritage from his mother's side – has since become the centrepiece of a larger tribal design, which swirls all over Hardy's shoulder.

Another of his famous body inks is an inspired portrait of the Madonna cradling a baby, right next to a star on his left shoulder, which was dedicated to his then-girlfriend after she found out she was pregnant with his son. This work of art was also intended to remind himself of his own renaissance or re-birth – to remember that he can take care of himself, his parents and his son.

downloaded from pinoyinkers.com



International Bicycle Film Festival Singapore cycles ahead

Photos: KK Chin, Roger Chua

The International Bicycle Film Festival Singapore (IBFFSG), a cultural non-profit Organisation committed to advocating the 'Bicycle Movement', celebrated its inauguration with a special premiere of *The Program* at Shaw Lido on 18 November 2015.

The aim of IBFFSG is to have a more inclusive, safe and bicycle-friendly Singapore – by celebrating the passion and cultural importance of bicycles through arts, culture, health & fitness, fashion, sports, music and films.

As IBFFSG's official partner, F*** Magazine hopes our readers can support their cause at http:// simplygiving.com/NonProfit/IBFFSG, as every contribution goes towards their not-for-profit planning, curation and execution of programmes. You can also keep track of their movement at http://facebook.com/IBFFSG.























Indonesia Comic Con: The Convergence of Cultural Exchange

The first Indonesia Comic Con (ICC), which was held on 14-15 November 2015 at the Jakarta Convention Centre, made a successful debut with over 20,000 attendees.

The convention not only showcased toys and comics, but also brought entertainment, music and television icons from around the world to interact with fans from Indonesia (and a few from all over the world) who attended the two-day event.

International guests included Japan's Kenji Ohba (the world's first Space Ranger); Hitomi (clay artist and television personality); DJs Sasakure UK and Yuyoyuppe; Italian artist Simone Legno (tokidoki); American writer David Mack (writer and artist of *Kabuki*, a graphic novel, and Marvel Comics' *Daredevil*), and Nicole Marie Jean (cosplayer, artist, sculptor and designer).

Alongside the autograph seekers and toy hunters, there were also mural illustrations and cosplay competitions. In anticipation of the upcoming *Star Wars* sequel, a parade of cosplayers, toys and even paintings were presented – all to trigger *The Force Within*!

As one of the ICC's official media, we're glad to report that F*** Magazine's little corner of the convention hall was very well-visited, gaining us quite a number of new fans. One of our colleagues, in his fanboy excitement, even managed to snag his own limited-edition, Indonesia-made Space Ranger action figurine, complete with an autograph and photograph with Kenji Ohba!























WONDER WOMAN

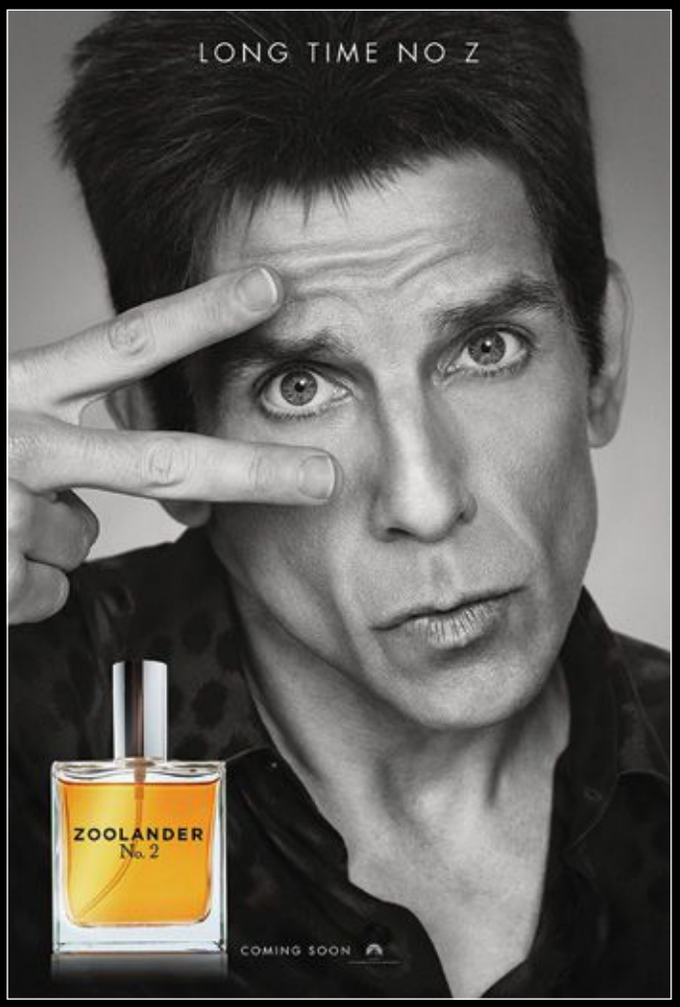
French actor Saïd Taghmaoui posted the first photo from the set of the solo *Wonder Woman* movie online, in which he is pictured alongside Chris Pine. Both actors are dressed in period garb, confirming that at least part of the film will be set during World War I. Pine's character is a pilot in the comics, so he will presumably be a World War I fighter ace in this version. "I'll be playing a superhero, but details are still under wraps, so I can't tell you much," Taghmaoui told French magazine *Ultra*. The exact translation reveals that he means his character is one of the good guys and not a villain, though perhaps not a "superhero" *per se*. Taghmaoui revealed he was picked from among "hundreds of potential candidates" and underwent extensive physical training for the part. While it's still a mystery as to what exactly his role is, it's probably a relatively major one, judging from the photo of a chair with his name on it next to those of Pine and star Gal Gadot.

Shortly after news broke of Taghmaoui's casting, Warner Bros. released the first official still from the standalone *Wonder Woman* movie and issued a press release that confirmed the cast. The photo shows Gadot as an Amazonian warrior shrouded in a green hood, with Elizabeth Tower ('Big Ben') in the background. In addition to Gadot, Pine and Taghmaoui, the cast includes Robin Wright, Danny Huston, David Thewlis, Ewen Bremner, Elena Anaya and Lucy Davis. The press release does not specify the roles each actor is playing. Nicole Kidman was reportedly closing a deal to portray a "high-ranking Amazon warrior", but is notably absent from the cast list, presumably replaced by Wright. Principal photography has kicked off in the UK and will also take place in France and Italy. Patty Jenkins, who helmed Monster and was originally set to direct *Thor: The Dark World*, is helming *Wonder Woman*'s first solo big-screen outing.

Wonder Woman hits cinemas in June 2017.







ZOOLANDER 2

After a 15-year absence from our screens, the dim-witted but mesmerising male model Derek Zoolander (Ben Stiller) returns with a splash in *Zoolander 2*. In these teaser posters, we can see Derek working his signature Blue Steel/Magnum pout and getting his selfie game on with fellow runway superstar Hansel (Owen Wilson), who is "so hot right now" and forever. The sequel has Derek and Hansel, literally labelled "old" and "lame", fighting to prevent themselves from fading into obscurity as they navigate the high-fashion scene in Europe, while villainous fashion designer Mugatu (Will Ferrell) stages a comeback.

Stiller stars and directs, also co-writing the screenplay with Justin Theroux. The trio of returning stars will be joined by Penélope Cruz, Christine Taylor, Kristin Wiig and Cyrus Arnold. Stiller and Wilson famously crashed Paris Fashion Week in March – entirely in character – to announce the film. The first film boasted some very glittery cameos, and we can expect to see the likes of Justin Bieber, Kim Kardashian, Ariana Grande and Benedict Cumberbatch (yes, really) pop up in this sequel.

Zoolander 2 struts into cinemas in March 2016.



ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Alice returns to Underland in the sequel to 2010's box-office behemoth, *Alice In Wonderland*. While Tim Burton is not returning to direct (he's been replaced by James Bobin of *Muppets Most Wanted fame*), the large majority of the cast is reprising their roles from the first film. This includes Mia Wasikowska as Alice, Johnny Depp as the Mad Hatter, Helena Bonham Carter as the Red Queen, Anne Hathaway as the White Queen and Matt Lucas as Tweedledee and Tweedledum. Alan Rickman, Stephen Fry and Michael Sheen are also back to lend their voices to Absolem the Caterpillar, the Cheshire Cat and the White Rabbit respectively. New additions to the cast include Sacha Baron Cohen as the villainous Time, Rhys Ifans as the Mad Hatter's father and Andrew Scott as Addison Bennet. Bobin helped create Cohen's signature characters Ali G, Borat, and Brüno, so you might expect something equally off-the-wall funny in this return to Underland. Linda Woolverton (*Beauty And The Beast*), who penned the screenplay for the 2010 film, is also writing the script for the sequel, based on Lewis Carroll's *Through The Looking-Glass*.



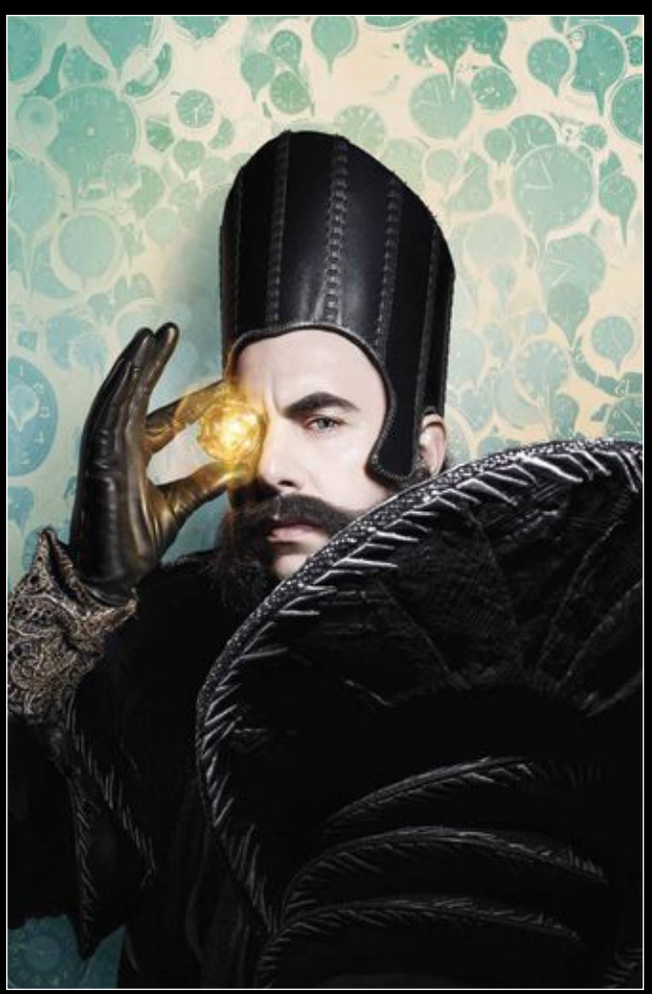
The sequel takes place several years later and we find Alice Kingsleigh following in her father's footsteps, sailing the high seas. Upon her return to London, she comes across a magical looking glass and returns to the fantastical realm of Underland, reuniting with her friends – the White Rabbit, Absolem, the Cheshire Cat and the Mad Hatter. However, something is up with the Hatter, who has lost his Muchness, so the White Queen sends Alice on a quest to borrow the Chronosphere, a metallic globe inside the chamber of the Grand Clock that powers all time. Embarking on a journey through time, she comes across friends – and enemies – at different points in their lives, and embarks on a perilous race to save the Hatter before time runs out.

Alice Through The Looking Glass leaps into cinemas in May 2016.











THE HUNTSMAN: WINTER'S WAR

There's a snow-storm brewing in this follow-up to *Snow White And The Huntsman, which will function as both a prequel and sequel i.e., it covers events that take place before and after the first film. Winter's War* will explore the origins of Eric The Huntsman (Chris Hemsworth), who served as a warrior under Freya (Emily Blunt), the Ice Queen. Eric defied Freya's one commandment – "Forever harden your heart to love" – when he fell for fellow warrior Sara (Jessica Chastain). After learning of her sister Ravenna's (Charlize Theron) death at the hands of Snow White, Freya summons her remaining soldiers to retrieve the Magic Mirror and attempts to resurrect her sister. Eric and Sara must fight their way back to each other and defeat the deadly sisters.

After news of director Rupert Sanders' affair with Kristen Stewart broke, the original plans for a direct sequel to *Snow White And The Huntsman* were shelved in favour of a spin-off focusing on the Huntsman himself. Neither Stewart nor Sanders is returning, with visual effects artist Cedric Nicolas-Troyan taking the directorial reins. In addition to Hemsworth, Sam Claflin and Nick Frost are reprising their roles from the first film. Ordinarily, there won't be much reason to get excited about a half-baked sequel to a film that wasn't all that great to begin with, but we have to admit that we're thrilled at the prospect of seeing Emily Blunt, Jessica Chastain and Charlize Theron in the same movie. Talk about a trio of badass A-list actresses!

The Huntsman: Winter's War will get you shivering in April 2016.










FROM THE PRODUCER OF MALEFICENT
THE
HUNTSMAN
WINTER'S WAR
APRIL
THIS FILM IS NOT YET RATED
UNIVERSAL





*** WTF

WE TALK FILMS

STAR WARS THE FORCE AWAKENS
F*** talks to the stars who play the good, the bad, and the legendary pair of Han Solo & Chewie!

JEDI JEDI ABRAMS
We track the career of the man chosen to reawaken the force

DEADPOOL
Director Tim Miller dishes up more about the comic anti-hero

THE DANISH GIRL
Director Tom Hooper talks about the transition

And More...

IN THE RUNNING

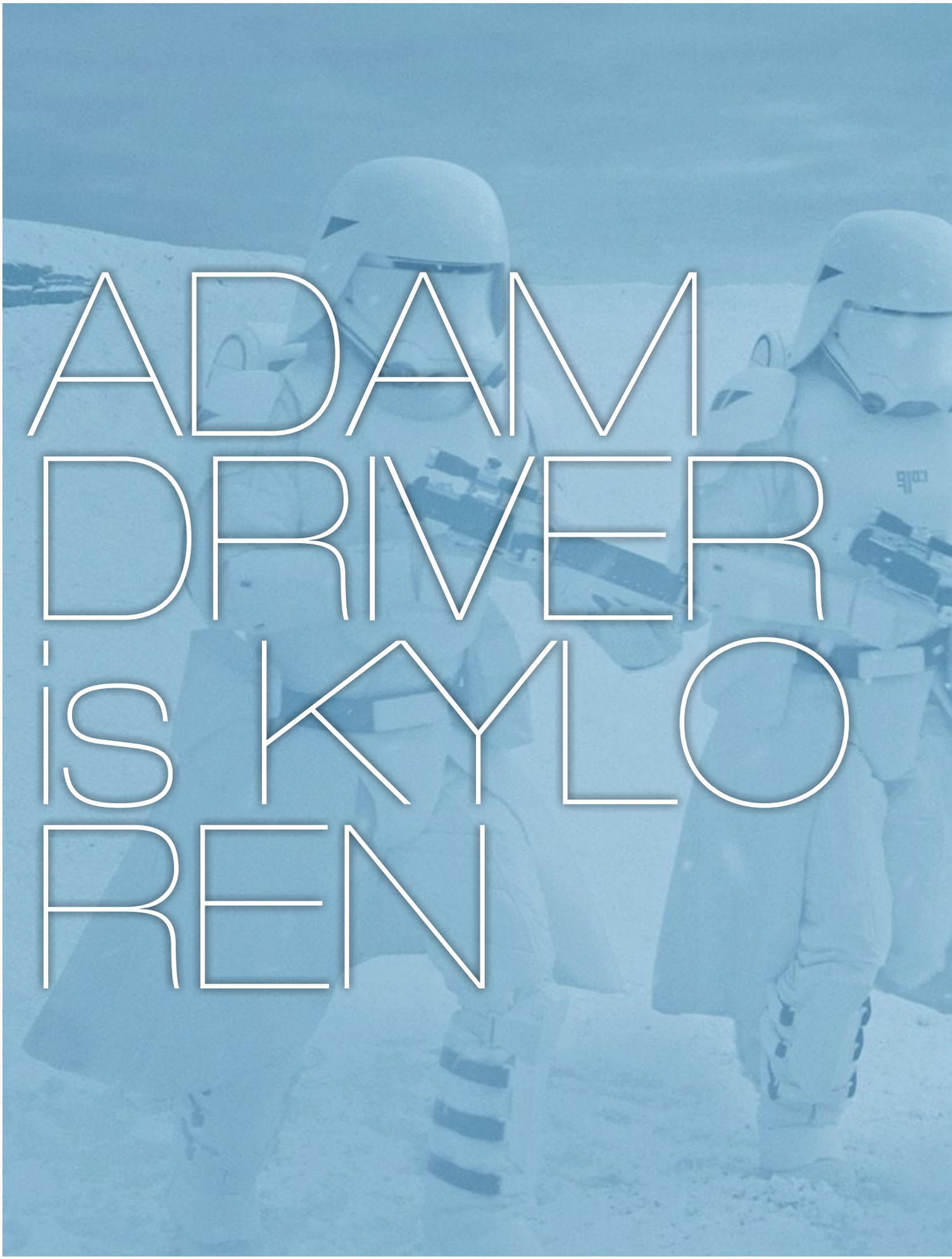
NEW I.T. BOY NICK ROBINSON RUNS FROM DINOSAURS IN JURASSIC WORLD TO UNKNOWN FORCES IN THE 5TH WAVE





A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away, STAR WARS swept the world and has become a cultural milestone for generations of movie-lovers.

This year, EPISODE VIII: THE FORCE AWAKENS brings us back to that galaxy we all know and love, introducing us to a host of characters - new and old - whose stories we can't wait to discover. *F**** brings you behind the scenes of J.J. Abrams' epic take on STAR WARS, in a series of exclusive interviews with **Daisy Ridley**, **Adam Driver**, **Peter Mayhew** and, of course, **Harrison Ford**. May the force be with all of us!



ADAM DRIVER is KYLO REN



How did you get involved in *The Force Awakens*?

I actually think it was the last day of shooting *Girls*. I got a phone call to see if I was interested in meeting J.J. Abrams to talk about *Star Wars*. I thought that it would be interesting to do, so I said yes. A month later, I left for L.A. and I met J.J. to talk about the role. Then I met with Kathleen Kennedy, who talked more about it. I was very excited; it's such a big thing and I've never done anything quite like this with this many moving pieces. Wearing a mask is quite a challenging thing. It was very scary and terrifying, so it wasn't something that immediately seemed like a yes. Actually, I thought about it quite a bit, even though it was kind of a no-brainer thing, but I didn't want to take it lightly. Then, six months later, they all worked it out and that was it.

How much was J.J. Abrams able to share with you after you signed on?

J.J. Abrams pretty much walked me through the whole thing. He talked about how he wanted to start it, and the themes that he was going with. He talked about things that inspired him, that he and Larry Kasdan were already working on. There have been changing bits and pieces since then, but it's all pretty much the same. J.J. had ideas very clear in his mind about the conventions that he wanted to upturn and things that grounded Kylo Ren as a character.

Actually, character was something that he talked about the most. I feel like some of the movies are so heavy on special effects or visuals and lots of things get lost as far as two people talking to one another [is concerned]. And that was something that J.J. stressed from the beginning. It was all character; there was hardly any talk of special effects. When we first originally met and talked, it was all about grounding these people in a reality, even though it's a long time ago in a galaxy far away. If no one cares about what's happening or no one believes that these people are real, then you won't care about any of it.

How did you feel about taking on such a role?

The idea of doing it is a scary thing. Even though J.J. mapped out what that character does, he left out a lot of things [and left them] for us to discover. He wanted to get my input, which was a huge thing in a movie of this scale. Suddenly, you have a director who wants you to be involved in making it, and just because of the history of these movies, that's very exciting. I was a fan of the *Star Wars* movies when I was younger, so suddenly to work on it in my adult life and have input seems unbelievable.

How has it been working on practical sets?

I found those scenes very scary and exciting at the same time. Everything is so real. I think grounding everything in a reality is more effective for people. Again, not to get on a high horse about technology, but sometimes [it's there] in place of something that's real and tactile, and I think that people take it for granted.

I'm actually reading the *Making of Star Wars*, the book that they gave us, and learning how all those people were doing things out of this need to do something different. The conventional way of making a movie at that time and special effects were very important, but it was all people collaborating in a room together, trying to figure out a way to make it real.

Wearing a mask – is that freeing or harder?

It's both. I get here for three or four days to shoot, and I put all this stuff on, the mask and the costume, then I put it away for a few weeks. Then I come back to it. It was such an evolving thing up until the days we started working on it. Then you're thrown into it, and boom! Then, suddenly, I can't see the ground. They are all good challenges. As we've been shooting, I find it more freeing. The physical life is really important. There are so many layers to him anyway. It's interesting to find out who he is with the mask on or with the mask off, and that was part of our initial conversations. There's something empowering for someone to completely hide themselves in a mask that is so intimidating.

Did you talk to J.J. Abrams and Michael Kaplan about the look at all? Any input on that count?

It was such an evolving thing. I'd fly in to see what they were coming up with. There were nods to Kurosawa and references to *samurai* in how the jacket bows out just a little bit. Then I'd leave for two weeks and come back to see how it was shaped a little more. Such attention to detail! My only input was whether it felt good or bad. I was involved in making it functional, which was great. They were all about how they could make it more efficient and something that someone could wear. It looks great, but if you can't move in it or breathe in it, then it doesn't make sense for the audience or the actor.

Talk us through how you convey the character's physicality.

Trying to [portray] someone whose physical life is very much about combat and fighting in a short amount of time is a challenging thing. One of the first things I wanted to do, as soon as everything was all scheduled, was to get over here as much as possible and start drilling daily and making it part of my daily life. [I had] three months to prepare, so I wanted to immerse myself in the training as much as possible.

The first week was, like, four hours a day of fight training; just stretching and going over with sticks and gradually building up to the lightsaber. Then I go back to New York and work with people they sent there. Whenever we're not on set, I'm always with the fight guys.

It's almost like a play in a way, the dancing part of fighting. There's a structure and it's important to know where everything's going. You always learn new things about it and, for me, this has been a process where a lot of the external things have been formed that gave me more information. Usually, I feel like I try to work internally and try to think about how it feels from the inside out, but, for this, there are so many tactile things that I can actually hold on to that give me a lot of information. The fight choreography was one of them.

How cool and surreal is it to play this character?

Surreal is a good word to describe many things in this movie, but that's certainly one of them. Seeing everybody all in one room for the table read was surreal; I just wanted to sit back as an audience member and listen to them. I remember in the read-through that things would just come to life when the original characters read their parts. Suddenly, I just wanted to sit back and watch and enjoy the movie, but then I realised I had lines to say and a part to play. I got to act across from people who have no idea that they are very much a part of my youth.

How has it been working with J.J. Abrams?

What he does with such ease and grace and collaboration – that is so rare. As a *Star Wars* fan, I am impressed with the way that he's making everything grounded in reality and actually tactile, and not a greenscreen [effect]. He's making the movie that I want to see and that you want to see. I can't think of anyone at their life-point who's better suited to direct this.

What makes *Star Wars* great?

At the end of it, I think the great thing about *Star Wars* is that, yes, it's a long time ago in a galaxy far away and there are spaceships and lightsabers, but the family story and the friendship and sacrifice elements are really big human themes that make it enduring. All those human things are what connected people to those movies in the first place. It's never been taken lightly and there's always been a conversation that starts with putting the humanity in it.

Do you have a fun *Star Wars* memory?

I think everyone does. I feel like it was just part of childhood. Now, with the *Star Wars* movies being made, or maybe because I'm more aware of it, all I think about is *Star Wars*, in the sense of how much *Star Wars* has embedded itself into the culture. I always felt like it was part of my upbringing.



DAISY RIDLEY IS REY



How did you hear about the part?

The first time I actually heard about this, I was with three friends. One is a make-up artist and the other is a stylist. Somebody said, "Did you hear *Star Wars* is coming out?" I immediately e-mailed my agent, and said that I really need to be seen for this. I don't know why; I just had this weird feeling. I wound up getting an audition. So, for the first audition, I was an hour early. Literally pacing up and down outside. I'd never been nervous like that before for something. It was the first time in an audition process that I felt everyone was rooting, not for me, but for the idea of an unknown person getting the part.

Did you know you were going for the lead?

I knew it was a big part, but I didn't know that it would be in the whole thing. I didn't know what Rey's journey would be and where she would end up. It was only when I read the script that I realised the enormity of, not only her, but her place in the whole thing.

How did you find out you got the part?

My last audition was really amazing. A few days later, I knew I'd hear from J.J., and my phone was broken. I didn't get the call. I didn't know what was going on. I finally got through to him and he told me I'd be starring in *Star Wars*.

And what was your reaction?

I was outside a theatre where my friend was in a show, of which I missed the first half while all this was going on. I remember kicking a bottle on the ground like everything had changed. But it was all the same. And then I had to watch the rest of the show. My phone died. I couldn't call anyone. I sat on the tube going home thinking, 'Oh my God'. Not able to tell anyone for an hour. Then, finally, I could tell my mom and sister. But it didn't really kick in for months.

How did you tell your family?

I burst the front door open and went, "I got *Star Wars*!" My sister was like, "What?" And my mum was like, "What?" When I told my dad, who was asleep at the time, he just swore. That's how it happened.

How was that time for you, when you wanted to tell the whole world and couldn't?

The time between knowing and the announcement was so strange. I was thinking about it as if I were pregnant, like I couldn't tell anyone until the three-month mark. It was originally a month, and it kept extending. My birthday was really hard. I sat with all my friends, and it was really hard not to say anything. As time went on, it got easier. My mom, dad and sister knew, so I had that.

What does it feel like to be a star in a movie that has global appeal?

I'm just starting to realise how big a thing it is. When J.J. Abrams told me I got the part, he said that my life was going to change. I could imagine it, but I couldn't feel it, until it began to happen. The people who have done it before are coming back and it's like a family. It's like people revisiting things. So, I feel honoured that I've been allowed to continue the journey with my part, as well as [be] part of the team.

Were you a fan of the franchise?

I remember being in the cinema and watching one, because I remember being terrified. But, because I was younger than the first generation of *Star Wars* fans, it wasn't such a huge thing in my life—until now. But it does permeate popular culture. It's in magazines. It's referenced everywhere. But it was only this year that it became a really big part of my life.

Who's your favourite character? Whom do you relate to?

Luke Skywalker. I think of it more of a universal thing. He embodies so much of everyone. Everyone starts out on a path; then circumstances change, and things happen, and you go to a new path. The thing that's always with him is the good. He's the good against the evil. He's looking out for Leia and Han Solo too. He's got other people's best interests at heart. So the choices he makes are positively affecting, not only him, but the people around him. I think that's what so many people do in life and that's probably why I feel like that. He's someone I can relate to.

Do you have a favourite line from *Star Wars*?

It's from *The Empire Strikes Back*. On Luke's way to find Darth Vader, Yoda tells Luke that he has to go in a dark cave. Luke asks Yoda, "What's in there?" And Yoda says, "Only what you take with you." That brings everything together; the idea that everything you have inside you hopefully will lead to good things. Luke, even at the end, hoped for the best in his father, and the best there was. So you have to give it to him that his hope held out.

What are the life lessons that *Star Wars* offers you?

Family is incredibly important, but I also think, in fifty years, I'll look back and really realise the life lessons that I learned from this part of the journey as kind of a whole. So, hopefully, I'll learn some more life lessons on the way.

What will you bring to *Star Wars*?

I'm still early on in my life, let alone in my career. But, hopefully, I'll bring freshness and self-confidence, but with vulnerability. All the things that make me, that's what I'll bring to the character.

What would you like to impart to young girls as you embark on this journey?

I would say: be strong and be thoughtful and take care and realise how you're affecting other people. Learn and grow and don't be scared if things are offered to you that you're not sure about but may change your life. Dive in feet first. Take everything you can and appreciate every day. Appreciate the people around you who support you and never feel on your own because you never are.

Who is Rey and what is her role in the story?

Rey begins in her own world. She goes on this crazy adventure and meets Finn and BB-8 and she finally starts to make these bonds she's never had before. It'll be epic.

Can you talk us through your look?

We went through many versions of hair, and a few versions of costume. When we finally decided on the hair, and I put the costume on, you could feel everyone go, 'That's how she should be'. Everything is supposed to look like Rey put it together herself. So, the hair is the iconic three buns, which we call the three knobs. The costume is gorgeous. It's pretty, but she works in it. Everything she's got fits her perfectly. I put the costume on and I feel pretty badass.

Talk us through the training process.

I started stunt training just a few weeks after I found out. We did hand-to-hand and used boxing to warm up. J.J. wanted me to look like I work out. So I've been working the upper body. That was four hours a day, four days a week, for three months. Without the guys we're training with, there's just no way John Boyega and I would have gotten through Abu Dhabi. The running stuff was so hard. It was a relief when there were explosions, because we needed a break from the running. I haven't stunt-trained for a while, but I'm still fitness-training to keep the levels up. There are such long days that you need the energy it brings.

What sorts of things do you do?

Stunt-wise, we'll do warm-ups and sparring, and kicks and boxing. Then, I've been climbing. So, I started at a proper climbing wall; now they have one on the stage. I really like it now. There were days if I slipped, my confidence was lost. But I really like it. It's so amazing doing something you haven't done before and feeling that you're gaining knowledge in it.



Tell us about the staff training.

We started the staff training with a wooden stick. I don't know how I did it; the adrenaline must have kicked in on the day. I never thought I'd be able to carry on as long as I did doing the fight sequence. The staff was fun. On the day of the fight scene, I was petrified. It was the first action thing I'd done. After the fight, I felt good. I felt like all the training had been for a good reason. In training, you feel like you're pushing yourself to the limit. Then, you get on set and push further. It's an incredible feeling.

Did you get anything out of the training personally?

I was really pleased with the training as a personal thing. We have this incredibly strong female character, and to have a strong female character is amazing. I'd never climbed before; I'd never done fight training before. It's such an amazing feeling to scale a 30-foot wall, or get through a fight with an incredible swordsman. I feel like I held my own and that's an amazing feeling.

Talk us through your experience in Abu Dhabi.

Abu Dhabi was really nice, because we were able to go a day early. John and I were taken around the mosque and palace, which were really lovely. We had a couple of days to get used to the heat as well. It was so hot that you could literally feel the sand burning through your shoes. But, once you give in to the heat, it's okay. You know it's consistent; it's not going to change, so there's no point in fighting it. But everyone was so well-looked-after.

When it got to the running bits, the hardest part was when it was a mix of hard and soft sand. That was a killer on the legs. The night before the last day of filming, that run was easier but my lungs were really pushing it. It got hotter and hotter. You'd go from doing lots of stunt things, then to acting and intimate moments.

Meeting BB-8 was tricky, because I hadn't worked with a person on screen, let alone a little droid! So, that was hard but, because it was so tricky at first, it made it much better when things got easier. Towards the end of Abu Dhabi, I looked back and thought: I've really come a long way since the beginning. I look back now and wish I could do the first few days again. The atmosphere is amazing.

Talk about your co-star, John Boyega.

It's so great how well we get on. In Abu Dhabi, we didn't have a chance to really meet, and that relationship wasn't there at first. But since we're here, and building that relationship in the scenes, it's easy. It's not hard to find it with someone you get on with. It's a chemistry thing. As it went on, we're just like brother and sister. We get on really well. We're both incredibly silly.

How did you feel when you first stepped onto the Millennium Falcon?

What was so strange was the crew was hundreds big, then suddenly, it was just a few of us. It's such an iconic set and J.J. really wanted it to be perfect, so there was no mistaking what we're trying to create. It's just so big. There are moments where I'm like, "I'm flying the Millennium Falcon!"

How did you feel about being on set with the legacy cast?

When I first met Harrison, we just sat down for a coffee together. He was talking about his experience in the whole thing, not just Han Solo, but the *Star Wars* saga. Then we all had dinner together, which was great.

And Chewie. Was he everything you dreamed of?

It's so funny seeing Chewie up close. He's got a little moustache that is lighter than his face. And he's just so big!

Tell us about working with J.J. Abrams.

J.J. is amazing. I've never really been on a film set before, and everyone adores him. He's very kind, very generous. He was so great at the beginning because I was so nervous. He's so patient, which is really important for me because I spent a lot of time going, 'I can't do this'. He made sure everyone on set was feeling great. There's no one not worthy of a hello and a thank you. There have been so many moments when he's gotten on the mic and told everyone that the work they're doing is incredible, which it is. They're getting that warmth from him that is needed. In such a big film, personal relationships can be lost. But, because he is who he is, they're not at all. Everyone feels praise. Everyone feels loved. Everyone feels appreciated. That is so important. He's created this incredible world and, in the real world, he's this incredible man as well.

What about the producer, Kathleen Kennedy?

The first time I met her, we were talking about role models and she seemed really approachable. It wasn't until after that meeting that I found out how many films she's worked on. We were talking to her the other day, John Boyega and I, and she was just laughing. She's incredibly powerful and incredibly smart. She's a mother. She's caring. She's kind. She's there every day. She's not this scary person who runs the show. She's someone who's there as support, making sure we're happy. She's an incredible woman.

Do you think that *Star Wars* is about family?

Yes, and the family thing translates everywhere. Even on set, it feels like a family. It's that feeling of bonding. Because Rey is trying to find her place in this world in the same way I was trying to find my place in the world, the similarities were really nice. I felt so welcomed and taken-in, and people seemed to care how I felt, which translates into the Rey thing as well. She suddenly has these people who care about her and she's finding her place within that.

Tell us about BB-8.

BB-8 is going to be loved by everyone. He's so small, so much smaller than R2-D2, and because he's puppeteered, he's alive. He was the first character I had a real scene with, and I was nervous because he's not a human being. But, because of the puppeteers, he comes alive. BB-8 is brilliant. He's amazing.

Do you feel that Rey is your character now? That you've got this?

I realised what this film might be to people. I hope that people will love it. I think they will. I feel like I'm coming into my film family. Every day is fun. I haven't had one day when I didn't enjoy it. There are moments when I think how many people love *Star Wars*, and it's scary trying to fit into that world that people know so well and love so much. It's nerve-racking thinking what Rey might represent to these people and whether they'll like her or not.

What sticks in your mind as a fond memory?

I can't pinpoint a specific memory. Every day, getting to set, I feel like I'm fizzing with excitement off of something new: incredible creatures, sets and people. I can't [pick] a favourite part.

Was that the most surreal moment?

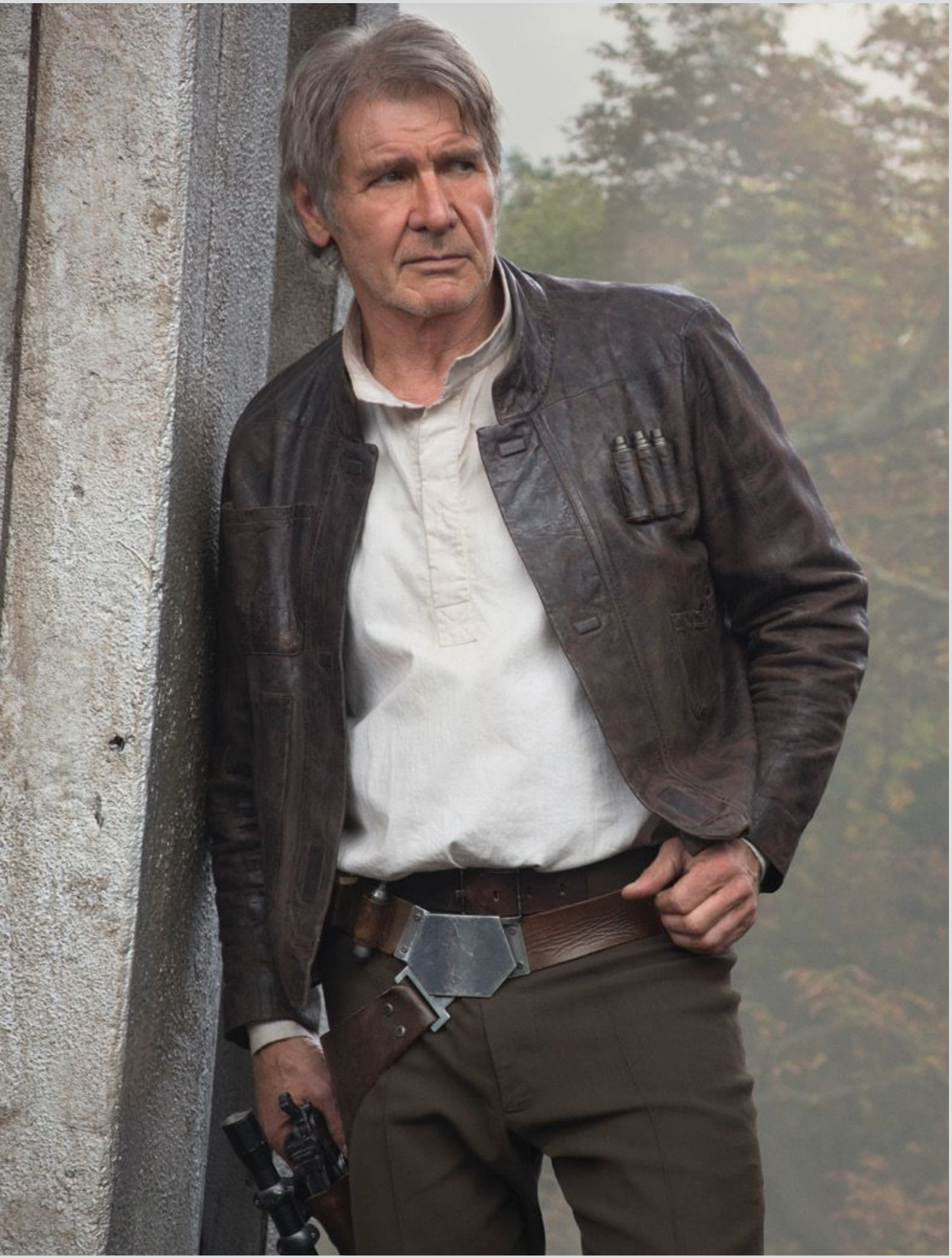
The first few months of doing the job were so surreal, I can't even remember some of it. I suddenly felt part of the excitement, part of something that people were going to love and people were excited to see again. You feel you're not alone. Everyone is part of this whole thing, trying to make *Star Wars* happen again in the best way. I think people are going to love it.

What do you want audiences to take away from the film?

I'd love for people to feel the way we do working on it. There's such a good feeling about the film and what we're doing and the characters that are being made and formed in front of our eyes. I'd love for the audience to understand each of the characters' stories and connect with the new characters, and I hope that their love for the old characters returns even more than before. I'd love for people to leave the cinema thinking, aside from all the action and the fights, that it's an incredible story of people finding their place in the world.



HAR-RISON FORD is HAN SOLO





Is this your first interview about *Star Wars* since your Jedi days?

It's certainly a part of almost every general interview. But, specific to the *Star Wars* films, I probably haven't talked about it for something like 25 years.

When did you find out they were going to make new films?

It was a couple years ago, but I didn't see a script until about a year and a half ago, when I started getting involved.

Did you need persuading to come back?

I had a degree of self-interest. I was very gratified when I first saw the script and thought there were some amazing ideas, interesting things to do. Then I was very excited for the opportunity to work with J.J. Abrams, whom I've known for a long time.

You've known Kathleen Kennedy for a long time. Was her involvement part of the attraction?

It's the story; it's the movie that's going to be made. Of course, people are a very important part of the mix and you have relationships with people that are very important. I have a very long and fruitful relationship with Kathy Kennedy, so I was glad to be able to work with her again. I thought it was going to be fun. I knew that the film would be in good hands, but that wasn't the only attraction to the project for me.

What did J.J. Abrams tell you about his vision?

We had discussions about the development of that character and his relationship to other characters in the story. They were very interesting and encouraging conversations. Then, there was some work done in respect of the questions I had or input that I had with J.J. Abrams and I was pleased with that. But I'm a 'get on at the beginning and off at the end' kind of guy, so I don't really remember the street signs along the way.

Was it enjoyable to be able to give more input?

We all had a certain amount of input once we got started. Over the course of making the *Star Wars* films, we worked with three different directors, and each of them had a different style and different attitude towards the process. I would say that the relationship with those three different directors was different, but I always felt that there was a degree of collaboration that was comfortable for everybody involved.

What does J.J. Abrams bring to the table as a director?

He's very thoughtful and very wise about human nature and the development of character and relationships. He brings a real sincerity and emotional understanding to relationships, which is something I was very pleased to see. He's an enormously skilled filmmaker and a very efficient director and producer. So it has been a real pleasure to work with him and all of the members of his team as this film has gone on.

What was it like to walk back onto the Millennium Falcon set?

I spent a lot of years here, so it was fun to see it again. I didn't remember it as well as I thought I did. There are things I remember about the cockpit and the funny stuff we went through. For the original cockpit, I asked George to let us get into it, so we could try it on for size. Finally, we did get a chance, Chewie and I, to walk into the cockpit. Of course, he couldn't get into the seat. Flying it developed a little bit between iterations of the first three films, but it started to come back to me. It was fun.

What is it like working with Daisy Ridley and John Boyega?

They are both very engaging personalities; both in their real lives and in their screen characters. I think the audiences will be delighted to make their acquaintance and follow them through the story. They're both very inventive and spirited presences. Their characters are very interesting and go through some interesting changes. The casting has been brilliant, in both cases.

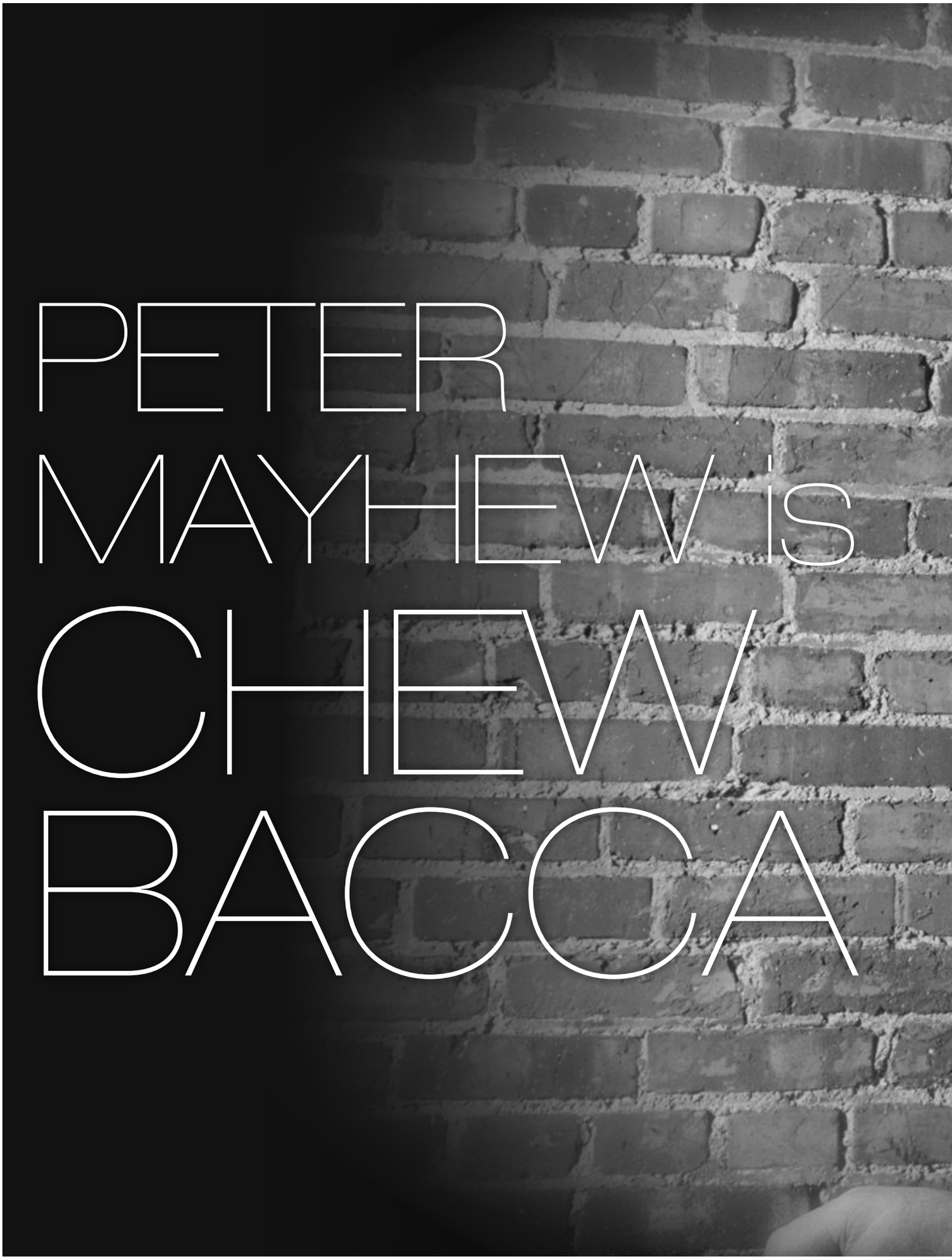
Are relatable characters important?

The genius has always been this science-fiction/fantasy context but [one that is] underpinned by an emotionally recognisable human story that we all relate to by degree. We all recognise the power of these relationships, and the complications in people's lives, and it's made these films so important to pass on from generation to generation. You can call them family films, but they are iconic representations of what we know about the complications of our lives.

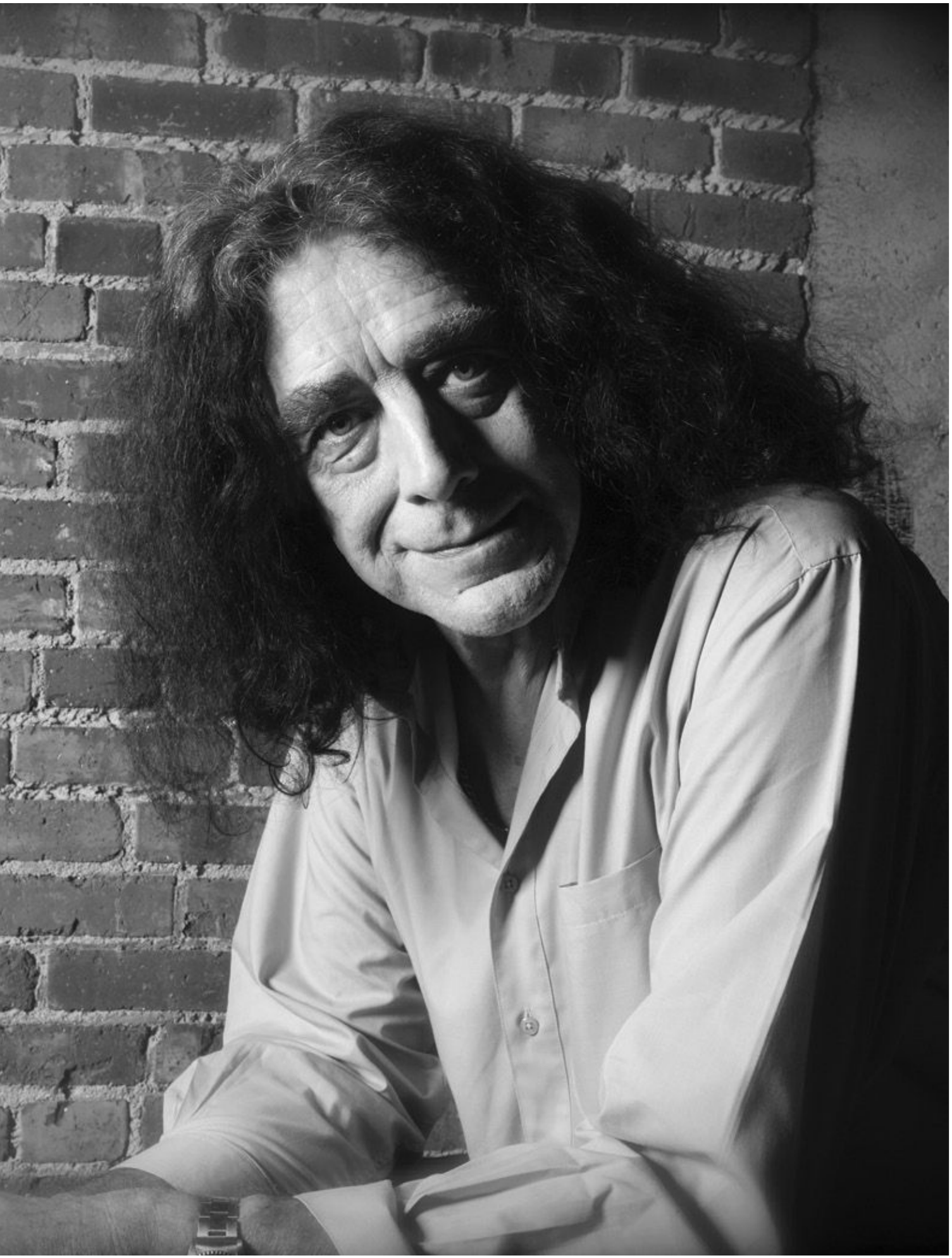
What do you hope audiences will take away from this film?

Recognition of our common humanity, and that all of us face the same kinds of problems in our lives, and that there's hope. There's joy in the celebration of right and wrong and in the recognition of truth that sustains us. And they'll have fun along the way!





PETER MAYHEW is CHEWBACCA



Talk us through the process of becoming Chewbacca.

I started back in 1977. I had done a movie called *Sinbad And The Eye Of The Tiger*. I played the Minotaur. That was a wonderful opportunity. About six months later, I got a phone call that they were looking for a tall person for another movie. That led to an interview with George Lucas. George's office was enormous. I sat down on the sofa and, when George walked in, I stood up. The interview was just about over at that point. George said that Chewie would do mime action. He can negotiate, but he doesn't make human noises. So, you have to watch what other people are saying and consequently you join it up with body action and that sort of thing.
Then we went down to the creature shop and got a face mask done. Next day, we went to a costume shop in London and got the suit made. Everything started to happen from that point on. It was a remarkable time in my life.

How much was scripted for you and how much was you?

I'd say about 50/50. The way I looked at it, say we're in the cockpit. You've got four people in there. Chewie can't stand there looking like a piece of furniture. He has to react to everybody's attitude. And he can't say verbally what he wants to, so he either has to use his mouth or eyes or body language of some sort. So, that was 50-70%. I expected to be fired the first week. But, fortunately, George saw what I was trying to do, and here we are many years down the road. It was fortunate that I was able to bring that to the character. George had said in interviews that it would be a mime character.

Seeing Chewie just melts hearts. Why is that?

Chewie's a teddy bear. Everybody has had a teddy bear at some stage in their lives. He's lovable; he's cuddly. I don't know what it is. If I don't do anything else, this is my chance to go into the history books. It's already in there. You look at the record books and listed are Han, Chewie, C-3PO, all the way down the list of popularity. I'm quite happy.

Talk us through the table read.

The read-through was interesting, because we met all the cast. Obviously, I see Carrie [Fisher], Harrison [Ford] and Mark [Hamill] because of the conventions and signings we do. It was nice to see Anthony [Daniels] again and meet Andy Serkis, and all the newer guys, and see how the characters work in the story. We all sat down and went through it. It was interesting; I've never done a read-through like that. Everybody was relaxed and could get to know one another again and meet different people.

For the team to be together, was that a surreal moment?

It was wonderful. I hadn't seen Harrison in a good few years. It was so nice. Talk about a wonderful feeling. That kind of relationship lives on. It will always be Han and Chewie. It won't be anything but.

What did J.J. Abrams tell you about his vision?

It's going to look as original as possible. If you look around here, it is. I have pictures, black-and-whites, of stuff that was there of the old set. It's as good. In five years, if it were maintained, that's what it should look like. With the cockpit scenes, there are still only two levers that actually work. There were only two in the original too.

What was it like coming to the Millennium Falcon set?

I knew it was going to be good, so I wasn't going to be too over-enthusiastic. One person's idea of perfect is not everybody's. But, when I came up here and looked across and saw the bed over there, I was like, "Yeah, this is back. This is what it looked like when we did the shoot with Mark and Harrison and Carrie."

What was it like putting the suit back on?

Wonderful. It's a completely new suit. It's better. It's lighter. It looks as good as the original one and it was built the same way. It was cut out, mask was made, and all the fur was sewn into the yak hair stuff that they used for the costume. It works.

What makes *Star Wars* so special?

We have so many different fans. We have doctors, lawyers and professional people who would rather play costume roles against card games because it's more intelligent. They build costumes; they do research. They get together as much as possible. They do good for everyone. They also collect for charity.

You've also got different generations now. The modern parents were the kids when we first started, and then [you have] the kids who are now 7 or 8 years old. The kids love it, because they're being brought up in this genre of *Star Wars*. Most of the fans we talk to were brought up on *Episodes IV*, *V* and *VI* first, then swap to *I*, *II*, *III*. I know the fans are all talking about this one. We hear: "What's the set like?" "Show us the set." "What can you tell us?" We're dealing with the fans all the time.

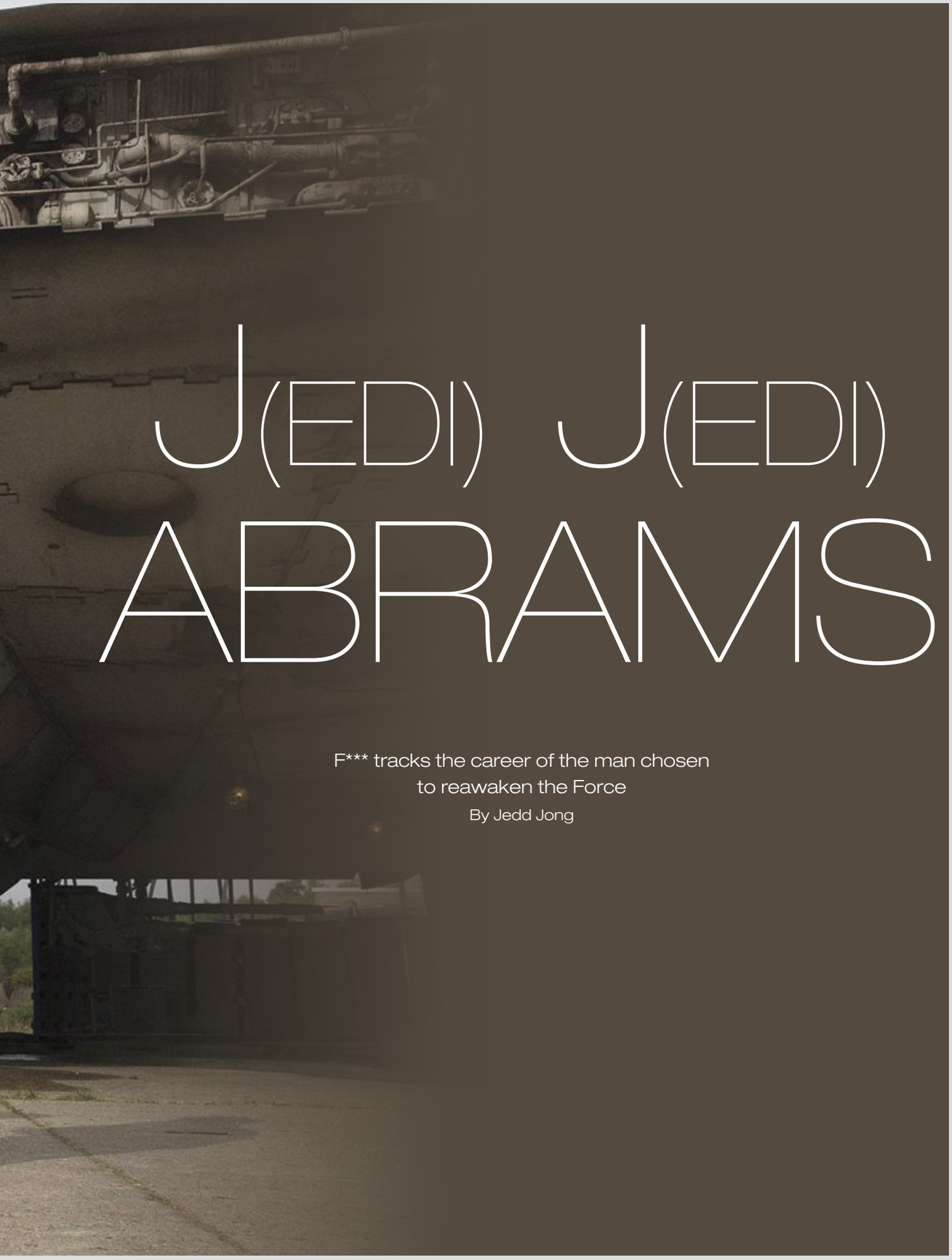
Any *Star Wars* stories?

There are the fans that get tattoos and ask us to sign them. Then there are the different people we've had: bikers, all races, all people who have come up to our tables at conventions to say thank you for Chewie. It's kind of nice.









J(EDI) J(EDI) ABRAMS

F*** tracks the career of the man chosen to reawaken the Force

By Jedd Jong

Getting the gig to direct the first *Star Wars* film in ten years is at once an incredible honour and a daunting, Herculean task. After all, we're talking about one of the most beloved, iconic film franchises in history, and one with a massive, passionate fanbase. Said fans have been burned before — once bitten, twice shy and all that.



The man taking the Starfighter controls behind the scenes of *Episode VII* just so happens to be a huge self-confessed *Star Wars* fan himself. This is the voyage that the writer/director/producer embarked on which led him to that fabled galaxy far, far away.

Jeffrey Jacob (J.J.) Abrams was born in 1966 to TV producers Gerald W. Abrams and Carol Ann Abrams. This would make him 11 when the original *Star Wars* film was released. "11 is a great age to have your mind blown," Abrams said at the *Star Wars* Celebration convention in Anaheim earlier this year. "I will never forget that feeling of seeing 'Long time ago, in a galaxy, far, far away' fade out. It was the first time a movie made me believe in another world that way." He recalled that the title '*Star Wars*' struck him as an odd one when he first came across it in the classic sci-fi culture magazine *Starlog*. He saw the movie on opening day, and left the theatre "never being the same again".

Aged 13, Abrams received from his grandfather a Super 8 camera, which he used to create his own homemade movies. "I would take anyone who was available — my sister, my mother, any friends — and I would kill them in crazy ways," he told *NPR*'s *Fresh Air* programme. As a teenager, Abrams entered one of his short films into a festival showcasing Super 8mm movies made by kids. Other contestants included Matt Reeves, who would go on to direct *Cloverfield* and *Dawn Of The Planet Of The Apes*; as well as Larry Fong, who would become the cinematographer for *300* and *Watchmen*. Steven Spielberg read an article titled *The Beardless Wonders Of Film Making* in the *Los Angeles Times* and hired Abrams and Reeves to restore and edit his own childhood 8mm films. A couple of years later, a 16-year-old Abrams composed the music for Don Dohler's low-budget sci-fi horror movie, *Nightbeast*. This was the beginning of a very promising career.

Abrams had planned to enrol in film school, but wound up attending Sarah Lawrence College instead. The advice given to him by his father was: "It's more important you learn what to make movies about, than how to make movies." In his senior year, Abrams co-wrote a feature-film treatment with Jill Mazursky that became the 1990 movie *Taking Care Of Business*, starring Charles Grodin and Jim Belushi. Abrams and Mazursky also wrote the comedy *Gone Fishin'*, starring Danny Glover and Joe Pesci. In between those two films, Abrams wrote amnesia drama *Regarding Henry*, starring none other than Han Solo himself, Harrison Ford; and the sci-fi romance *Forever Young*, starring Mel Gibson. Abrams was one of four credited writers on Michael Bay's sci-fi action blockbuster, *Armageddon*.

In 1998, Abrams and Reeves created *Felicity*, a TV series starring Keri Russell and set at a fictional New York university. "I miss writing for a show that doesn't have any sort of odd, almost sci-fi bend to it," he told *The Hollywood Reporter* in 2012, pointing out the difficulty inherent in devising stories for a show without a villain or high-stakes intrigue.

Abrams co-founded production company Bad Robot with Bryan Burk, and created the spy-action show *Alias* in 2001. Now, here was a show that was wall-to-wall high-stakes intrigue. On lead character Sydney Bristow, portrayed by Jennifer Garner, Abrams said, "She was a character with a secret, and that is always a fun place to start. But she wasn't a superhero; she was terrified at almost every step. But still, she would do the right thing. I think we would all like to believe we would behave like that when the going gets rough."

In 2002, Abrams wrote the screenplay for *Superman: Flyby*, a project that eventually failed to materialise. Abrams' script contained many deviations from established *Superman* lore, including a Kryptonian civil war between Jor-El and his evil brother Katar-Zor, Krypton remaining intact and Lex Luthor as a UFO-obsessed CIA operative who is revealed to be have been a Kryptonian sleeper agent all along. The leaking of this script played a large part in Abrams' desire to keep as tight a lid as possible on later projects. "To have a script that is nowhere near the latest draft, let alone the final draft, being reviewed online, it frankly made me a little bit paranoid," Abrams told NPR. "There are certain things that are, I think, important to keep quiet." He further explained that "it's not a Machiavellian sort of thing", but that the secrecy stems from a desire for "people to have a good time and to have a little bit of a surprising time".

2004 saw the premiere of *Lost*, which Abrams co-created with Jeffrey Lieber and Damon Lindelof for ABC. The network thought that *Alias* was too serialised in its storytelling, and Lindelof and Abrams promised the network that the show would be self-contained, with no 'ultimate mystery' to be solved. This might well be one of the greatest ruses in TV development history, as *Lost* was all about its 'ultimate mystery', the show and its complex mythology soon becoming a pop-culture phenomenon. Busy with other projects, Abrams left the show in the hands of Lindelof and Carlton Cuse, though it is a common misconception that he was involved throughout *Lost*'s six-season run.

To return to the topic of secrecy, Abrams explained the appeal he finds in this practice in a TED Talk in 2007. During the presentation, he brought out a "magic mystery box" that he had purchased 35 years ago from a magic shop and which he refused to open. "It represents infinite possibility. It represents hope. It represents potential," he declared. "What I love about this box — and what I realised I sort of do, in whatever it is that I do — is I find myself drawn to infinite possibility and that sense of potential. And I realise that mystery is the catalyst for imagination... What are stories besides mystery boxes?"



Abrams' first feature-film directing job was 2006's *Mission: Impossible III*, starring Tom Cruise. In an interview with *IGN*, Abrams

said he was able to create elaborate set-pieces, the likes of which he would have loved to have done on *Alias* but "we could never in a million years afford". *Mission: Impossible III* proved that Abrams could handle explosive spectacle with sequences like an ambush on a bridge, a helicopter chase, the IMF team breaking into the Vatican and a heart-stopping leap off a Shanghai skyscraper. Abrams also set out to "see who these characters were as people, not just as spies", showing Ethan Hunt's home life and his relationship with his wife. Abrams would take a stab at the spy genre again with the 2010 show *Undercovers*, which was cancelled after one season.

In 2008, *Cloverfield*, produced by Abrams and directed by Reeves, was released. The found-footage monster movie was promoted using a viral marketing campaign that captured the curiousity of many movie-goers. Abrams said the seeds of the project were sown when he was in Japan to promote *Mission: Impossible III* and was visiting toy stores there with his son. "We saw all these Godzilla toys, and I thought – we need our own American monster, and not like King Kong," Abrams said at Comic-Con in 2007. "I love King Kong. King Kong is adorable. And Godzilla is a charming monster. We love Godzilla. But I wanted something that was just insane and intense."

Later in 2008, the sci-fi procedural television series *Fringe* premiered. Abrams co-created *Fringe* with Alex Kurtzman and Roberto Orci, citing *The X-Files* and *The Twilight Zone* as inspirations. Abram's favourite TV series is *The X-Files*, and there is a large collection of memorabilia from the show on display at his Bad Robot offices. The show's overarching mythology involves the presence of a parallel universe, similar in some respects to the "mirror universe" of *Star Trek*.



Speaking of which, Abrams directed the 2009 *Star Trek* reboot, in what is likely his most high-profile feature-film directing gig prior to *The Force Awakens*. Co-writer Kurtzman said, "I always think of it as: *Star Trek* is beautiful classical music and *Star Wars* is rock 'n' roll, and it felt like *Star Trek* needed a little more rock 'n' roll to connect to a modern audience." Abrams certainly brought the rock 'n' roll with a kinetic, exciting and action-packed take on *Star Trek*, one which alienated some stalwart fans of the original series but which opened up what had become a slightly stodgy cult franchise to audiences at large.

Abrams has been upfront about being far more of a *Star Wars* fan than a *Star Trek* one. "I was never really a fan of *Star Trek* to begin with but the idea of working on something that is not necessarily your favourite thing can actually help, because it forces you to engage with it in a way an outsider can appreciate," Abrams told *The Sunday Times*. "My love of *Star Wars*, the energy of it and sort of the comedy and rhythm of it, I think affected *Star Trek*," he said in a separate interview with PBS. Naturally, there were many ardent Trekkers who weren't on board with this new take on the material, and they felt further maligned with the sequel, *Star Trek Into Darkness*, but both films received an overall positive critical reception. While Justin Lin is taking over the director's seat for *Star Trek Beyond*, Abrams is remaining as a producer.

Beyond his early screenplays, Abrams has dabbled in comedy, directing an episode of *The Office* and starring in the musical sketch, *Cool Guys Don't Look At Explosions*, alongside Will Ferrell and Andy Samberg. Abrams also got to perform a rockin' keyboard solo in the video, which spoofed the "unflinching walk" cliché seen in many an action movie.

Thereafter, Abrams contemplated two ideas for an original movie: a coming-of-age movie about a group of kids making their own movie, drawing on his childhood love of film; and a thriller about the Air Force transporting an alien creature to a secret facility, with said creature naturally escaping. He combined both these ideas into *Super 8*, which was an unabashed love letter to his childhood idol, Spielberg. Things came full circle in a way, from Abrams editing Spielberg's Super 8 home movies to having Spielberg produce a film about the Super 8 movement in the late '70s/early '80s. Abrams told *The Guardian* that he loved how Spielberg's films carried "a sense of unlimited possibility", but the way that lay around the corner "could be terrifying, it could be confusing, it could be disturbing, or it could be wonderful and funny and transportive".

Interestingly enough, it was super-producer Kathleen Kennedy, now the head of Lucasfilm, who suggested to Spielberg that he should hire the then-teenaged Abrams and Reeves to restore and edit his home movies. "We followed J.J.'s career, so when he committed to *Star Wars*, it was this kind of fantastic coincidence of fate, I guess – pre-ordained destiny or something," she said. Abrams was handpicked by *Star Wars* creator George Lucas over a host of A-list directors like David Fincher, Brad Bird and Guillermo del Toro.



In 2008, Lucas told *Total Film* that he's "left pretty explicit instructions for there not to be any more features". There would definitely be no *Episodes VII–IX*. In 2012, after the



acquisition of Lucasfilm by Disney, Lucas said, "I always said I wasn't going to do any more, and that's true, because I'm not going to do any more. But that doesn't mean I'm unwilling to turn it over to Kathy [Kennedy] to do more."

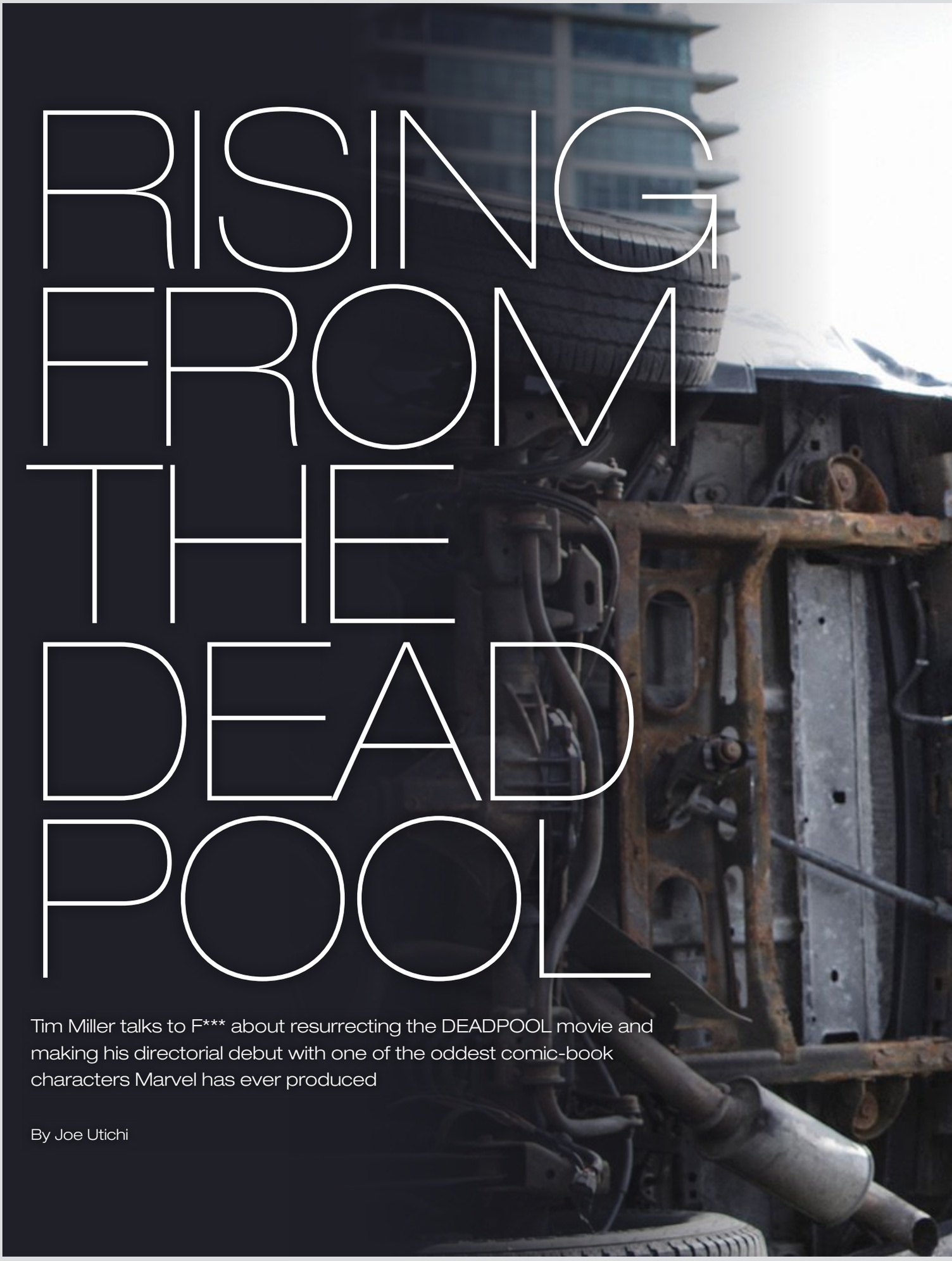
As a mega-fan taking the reins of a storied, long-lived franchise, there is the danger of being self-indulgent. Abrams addressed this in a *Vanity Fair* interview, saying he resisted the temptation to make *The Force Awakens* "meta-*Star Wars*" as that would be "an ironic approach, which feels anti–*Star Wars*". Instead, he maintained that he was focused on "inheriting and embracing the elements of *Star Wars* that are the tenets of what is so powerful [about it]".

Like all *Star Wars* fans, Abrams was enamoured of the iconic John Williams score. In the era before home video was readily available, the biggest piece of the movie Abrams could take home was the soundtrack, which he would often buy before the movie was even released. "I would lie on the floor in my room with my headphones on, listening to the soundtracks which would essentially tell me the story of the movie that I didn't know," he said. For Abrams, the most surreal moment in the making of the film was getting to meet the legendary composer. "I can't describe the feeling. All I will say is, just to state the facts of it: I am about to show John Williams 30 minutes of a *Star Wars* movie that he has not seen, that I directed."

While Abrams won't be sticking around to direct *Episodes VIII* and *IX*, which are being helmed by Rian Johnson and Colin Trevorrow respectively, there is no doubt that *The Force Awakens* will shape the franchise in a monumental way. "I do feel like there's a little bit more of a burden on [co-writer] Larry [Kasdan] and me to come up with a story that could at least be the beginning of what transpires over three films," Abrams told *Wired*. The framework has already been planned, the foundation for the new trilogy laid, and, according to Abrams, *Episode VIII* already written.

As Yoda said in *The Empire Strikes Back*, "always in motion is the future". Abrams has set a course for the future of the *Star Wars* franchise and there's no stopping the jump to hyperspace now.

Star Wars: The Force Awakens opens on 17 December 2015.



RISING FROM THE DEAD POOL

Tim Miller talks to F*** about resurrecting the DEADPOOL movie and making his directorial debut with one of the oddest comic-book characters Marvel has ever produced

By Joe Utichi



It might be a potential sci-fi blockbuster, but the filmmakers behind the big-screen adaptation of hit novel The 5th Wave have employed plenty of practical effects as they seek to keep greenscreen work to a minimum. For rising star Nick Robinson, this was a real boon.



The label "first-time director" projects an aura of inexperience but, even though *Deadpool* is Tim Miller's first feature film, his many years in Hollywood make him very much ready for the role. Already an Academy Award nominee for Best Animated Short Film for *Gopher Broke*, Miller is the co-founder of Blur Studio, which specialises in visual effects and animation for the motion-picture and video-game industries.

Amongst his feature-film credits, Miller was tapped to deliver title sequences for David Fincher's *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo* and Alan Taylor's *Thor: The Dark World*. His three-minute prologue scene for Taylor's Marvel adaptation establishes the context for the film that follows, and Miller worked with actors Christopher Eccleston and Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje to blend greenscreen performances with dozens of CG action shots.

Deadpool, adapted from the Marvel Comics character created in 1991 by Fabian Nicieza and Rob Liefeld, tells the origin story of Wade Wilson (played by Ryan Reynolds), whose terminal cancer is 'cured' by the same Weapon X programme that created Wolverine, leaving him permanently disfigured, but impervious to pain and able to regenerate from his wounds. Dubbed "The Merc with a Mouth", Deadpool is a pop culture-literate anti-hero unique amongst comic-book characters in that he can break the fourth wall and flip superhero conventions on their head.

In post-production on the movie, which also features Morena Baccarin, Gina Carano, TJ Miller and Ed Skrein, Miller shares his passion for Deadpool, the super-powered antidote to superheroes.

Most first-time feature-film directors would dream of being offered a big studio superhero movie. How did this one come to you?

The executive at Fox who'd been working on the *X-Men: First Class* movie with Matthew Vaughn had seen a piece I'd done for a DC Universe project, which had a lot of superhero action. He thought *X-Men: First Class* could use some help with working out the detailed action choreography, so I was brought on to help with that. He was like, "You understand superheroes and how they fight each other."

He came down and we met and, by the end of that meeting, he said, "You know, I think you should really be directing your own film. You're a first-timer so I can't get you on anything big, but we have this other film… *Deadpool*. Are you interested?" I'd read the script already and I thought it was great, so I jumped at the chance. And then there were a whole series of hurdles to jump over, to make sure Ryan liked me, to make sure [producer] Lauren Shuler Donner liked me, to make sure I wasn't some kind of crazy weirdo.

Due diligence, they call it. It took a while to get the project together, didn't it?

Fox asked me to do a test as a proof-of-concept. They'd already hired me to direct but the test was more about proving the methodology of how the character would work. How you could blend CG shots with live-action shots and make something funny and action-packed. We got it to a point where it was either make it or not, and Fox decided not. Hollywood is full of projects that don't happen, so it wasn't like I was shocked it wasn't going to happen, but I was crushed.

When it didn't happen, the writers and I - and Ryan too - we really never gave up. My agent said, "Dude, just walk away", but I loved it so much. We kept pushing and I won't tell you the long trail, but we got other people involved that Fox trust and got them to say, "Look, you've got to make this movie." Two things happened: the footage we'd shot leaked, and Simon Kinberg came on board as a producer. Fox really trusts him, and he's a real gatekeeper for all the Marvel stuff at Fox. Simon said, "Look, the script is great, and Tim's not a total loser. I really think you guys should make this film."

Where does that passion come from? Were you always a fan of the comic?

When I came on board the project, the script was already great. It was one of the best scripts I'd ever read, which was why I wanted to do it so much. Plus, I've been reading comic books pretty hard-core for the last 35 years or so. If you came to my studio, you'd see a giant two-storey wall of bookshelves that house my years and years of comic-book collecting. I'm primarily a Marvel guy, so of course I'd read tons of *Deadpool*. Captain America's very serious and the X-Men are very serious, but *Deadpool* was one of the few that had a real sense of humour about it and didn't take itself so seriously. In my stack of comic books, it was always the nice palate cleanser to the more serious stuff.

Ryan Reynolds shares your passion for this character. What does he bring to the role?

I have to tell you, aside from the action stuff

and the comedy, there's a lot of heavy dramatic work and he really goes through the process. He's a brilliant actor and, for a first-timer, it's really interesting to watch him work. We'd done the first week of shooting, and I'm not one of these guys who thinks I have to know everything, and I went over to Ryan and said, "Dude, what could I be doing better?" He said, "Tim, this has been the most satisfying week of filming I've ever had." He said, "You don't know everything, but at least you don't pretend like you do. It allows everybody else to help you without a lot of ego involved and it makes for a better process." We had a really great experience and there was no drama on the set. Everybody really loved the movie and was happy to continue.

There are a lot of jokes in the script that poke fun at the superhero world, including Fox's own stable of characters. How did you get those past the studio?

We got no pushback from Fox at any point. They didn't come in with a bunch of notes, though I think they were little prepared for how weird this movie is. There's some really odd stuff in there and, tonally, it's all over the map. I think it does a nice job of balancing it, but you go from action to tragedy to weird situation-comedy with a blind black woman in an apartment with Wade, and the biggest thing we've had to adjust in post is to give the audience a beat to make those transitions. They're pretty sharp sometimes, tonally.

Do you think the delays to get to set ended up helping the project, now that we live in a world of wall-to-wall superhero cinema?

Like *Game Of Thrones* is sort of a gateway drug to fantasy, I think it's the same thing where you had to have those first movies that taught you a whole language of storytelling. Now people are familiar with it and they're ready to take the training wheels off the bike and look to something more aggressive, like *Deadpool*. As much as it's for the hard-core fan – and I don't think we ever sold out on who the character is – we've also made a real effort to be inclusive and make it accessible to people who haven't read the comic. Humour, really, builds most of that bridge. We like to laugh, and this one's funny. We're not packing it too much with insider references, where the audience will feel stupid if they don't get it. I want my wife to like the movie, which is why I made sure that Ryan took his shirt off a little bit. There's a love story there and I think people really respond to Vanessa's character. The relationship is really strong. I think you care about the characters before they start beating each other up, which is really important to me.

We should talk about your other cast members – Morena Baccarin we know from *Firefly* and *Homeland*, and T.J. Miller is hilarious on *Silicon Valley*.

I could not have asked for a better cast. Morena… the first time she came in, I said, "She's too beautiful for Vanessa." I wanted somebody that initially was down-to-earth, and yet she's this sort of angelic goddess. But then she starts performing and you can see this tough kid from the streets come through. She was so laidback and easygoing and a total pro.

T.J. Miller, he's a nut. He couldn't do the same line twice, because he was always coming up with a new joke. It was challenging on set, because I was like, "Dude, just do the line as it's written one time… Please…" [laughs] But he'd just keep riffing and he was great. He's actually been down to the studio when we've been cutting, two or three times, because he's just like, "Can I watch the movie again? I just want to watch it." He's working with the writers now too and he's amazing.

You have Ed Skrein, the star of *The Transporter Refueled*, as the villain of the piece, Ajax. What has he been like to work with?

I think people are going to be blown away with Ed Skrein's performance. He's so good and such a lovely man, and nobody worked harder than he did. There was some nonsense at Comic-Con where the story was, "Tim Miller says *Deadpool* will be like *Blade Runner*." It's not, at all, but I was telling Ed I wanted him to channel





Roy Batty from *Blade Runner*, with that kind of amoral weirdness. I just didn't want a typical villain. Ed really embraced that and, as soon as he locked into the mental state of who the character was, he just delivered. His face is so mobile; it's amazing and I loved watching him. We'd be on set for 16 hours a day and Ed would be hopping to get in. He'd be like, "Don't let the stunt guys do it; let me do it." His scenes are great, and he's got some meaty dialogue scenes that are really powerful.

As a first-time director, you're working with a major studio on a comic-book adaptation, but the bigger challenge feels like the fractured narrative of the movie. We jump forwards and backwards in time and this story teases itself out. Was that difficult to balance?

Yeah, you know, there was no time when the size of the movie stressed me out. Making a movie is a lot like running a company, which I've done for 20 years, so there was no point where I felt stressed out. I felt keen to do a good job, but I always felt in control and I had a great script and a great cast. I knew I'd be alright with that. And the studio left me completely alone. In fact, halfway through, the producer had to leave and I was completely alone for the last half of filming, which is pretty cool.

Then it becomes about solving the problems in front of you, and you're right: the challenge was making the fractured narrative work. It reads really well, but you have to make adjustments when you shoot it and pull it together, and that's the tricky part. But, again, I think my ignorance is fortunate in that I didn't worry about it too much. I just figured it would work out, because I didn't realise it was going to be difficult. [laughs] I just dove in, and then you adjust it and it all comes together. I think it's working really well right now.

Deadpool opens on 4 February 2016.

IN THE NICK OF TIME

Nick Robinson dives with F*** into THE 5TH WAVE, chatting with us about his character, and about how his life has changed since *Jurassic World*



It might be a potential sci-fi blockbuster, but the filmmakers behind the big-screen adaptation of hit novel The 5th Wave have employed plenty of practical effects as they seek to keep greenscreen work to a minimum. For rising star Nick Robinson, this was a real boon.

"In this movie, there were quite a lot of practical effects," says the 20-year-old actor, who shot to film stardom on the back of *The Kings Of Summer* and *Jurassic World*.

"We were working with real people; there wasn't a whole lot of greenscreen. But, when there is, that's when your imagination kicks in. I think imagination is like a muscle. The more you use it, the better you are at getting to where you need to go."

Based on Rick Yancey's imaginative 2013 novel, *The 5th Wave* focuses on a young girl, Cassie Sullivan, played by Chloë Moretz, who is bidding to survive in a world that has been decimated by four waves — huge, earth-shattering events, from tidal waves to pestilence — which are unleashed upon the planet by some unknown force. Robinson plays a high-school kid called Ben Parish.

The story tells of how, in the midst of the wreckage and as one of earth's last survivors, Cassie must fight to save herself, and her brother, even as the fifth wave looms. Her journey through the debris of civilisation brings her into contact with Colonel Vosch (Liev Schreiber), and with her former high-school crush, Ben Parish.

"Ben Parish is your average high-school kid. He's the captain of the football team, the quarterback with a lot of friends, and an all-around nice guy," says Robinson. "And, once the disasters strike, his life is changed forever. He survives, but he earns his nickname 'Zombie' after all the loss he's been through.

"He loses a lot of family and friends in the ensuing waves, and he eventually finds himself under the command of Colonel Vosch at an army base," the actor continues, "where he's forced to lead a squad of young soldiers.

"He's still trying to find out why he should even be fighting, because he's not sure exactly what's left or what he's fighting for."

In his squad is Cassie's younger brother. "That's ultimately what pushes Ben to fight," Robinson explains. "Cassie's younger brother is in the squad, and Ben sees something in him that makes him want to fight."

The shoot, he says, was fun. "There were a lot of exploding things, which is pretty cool. One moment where I had a great time was a scene with Colonel Vosch in the control room, where he lays out his plan for humanity. It was real fun to play around with that, with different tones."

Before filming began, he concedes to being intimidated by the man playing Vosch, *Ray Donovan* star Schreiber. "I'd seen *Ray Donovan*," he smiles. "Honestly, I was a little intimidated at first. I was expecting Liev to be a hell of a lot meaner than he was! But he was great to work with. And I always felt in very safe hands with the director. It was a good experience for me."

Up-and-coming British filmmaker J. Blakeson directs the movie, following on from the success of *The Disappearance Of Alice Creed*, which was a hit with critics and on the film festival circuit.

"Casting the right Ben Parish and the right Evan Walker was extremely important to balance either side of Chloë's character in this story," Blakeson says. "Ben Parish is the popular guy in high school, the heartthrob she admires from afar but really doesn't know.

"Nick was really impressive," he adds on Robinson's casting as Parish, "and, just like Chloë, he seemed to be beyond his years in his ability and emotional range."

Robinson's performance ability has been honed over a number of years, the young actor having made his debut in his hometown of Seattle at just 11 years of age, performing in a stage version of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.

In 2009, he landed the role of Ryder Scanlon, nephew of Melissa Joan Hart's character, on the TV sitcom *Melissa & Joey*, in which he starred until the show's conclusion in 2015. Subsequent performances in the feature films *The Kings Of Summer* and *Jurassic World* brought him to international attention.

"It was not something that I planned for, by any means," he says of his move into television and feature films. "It was something that I fell into. Although, had I remained in Seattle doing theatre, there would have always been the question of 'What if?'. You need have a strong belief in yourself and in those around you and the rest just comes."

His rising profile has brought a lot of added attention, which can be unsettling. "It definitely has its moments, where I'm like, 'What the hell is happening?'" he laughs, "like now, for example!

"But it's really exciting to have your work seen by a wider audience and to have better and better people working with you. I welcome the better opportunities."

With his eagerly anticipated performance in *The 5th Wave* set to hit cinemas very soon, those opportunities look set to continue for a long time to come.

Has being the oldest of five siblings helped with your performance in this movie?

Well, it definitely gives you a lot of empathy for the younger kids. I mean, that's ultimately what pushes Ben to fight. Cassie's younger brother is in the squad and he sees something in him that makes him want to fight.

What natural disasters scare you the most?

I just saw [the movie] *San Andreas* and, let me tell you, those earthquakes — you have got to watch out for those things. They're scary. Any of these huge things would be really, really scary to me.

Do you think we're more frightened of movies with disasters in them than we were, say, 20 years ago?

I think it's probably more real today than it ever has been. Between global warming and ISIS and a million different issues throughout the world, I think it's a time of great uncertainty and of great fear. One of the things that I like about *The 5th Wave* is that the ultimate responsibility falls on the younger generation to fight back and to rebuild. And I think that has quite a lot of relevance in this day and age.

Life must have changed quite quickly with *Jurassic World* and now *The 5th Wave*?

Yeah, there are definitely changes and there are new challenges with every job that you take. With *The 5th Wave*, there was a very specific set of challenges, but it's been a really interesting time and it's been great working with people like Liev and our great cast.

Do you have any advice for younger people who want to be actors?

I would say that you should find out what's important to you and just have a good sense of who you are, and who you want to play and what you want to do. Try and go with your gut instinct.



RIDING THE WAVE

F*** chats with Chloë Moretz about unlearning skills for THE 5TH WAVE and seeking out strong female characters in all her films



Who do you play in *The 5th Wave*?

I play a young girl named Cassie who is a very typical, ordinary girl, nothing too special. She doesn't excel at school. She doesn't excel in sports. She doesn't have the hot boyfriend. She is a typical young girl, except that, when you put her in these extraordinary circumstances, she becomes one of the strongest women I've ever been able to portray in a film. She doesn't back down for anything if it comes between her and her love for her brother. She will never stop and she will get to him no matter what. No matter how many times she's told 'No!', no matter how many times she's kicked and hurt, she will get to him. She perseveres, and that's the beauty of humanity, which these aliens try and take away from us.

Could you relate to the brother-sister angle?

I could, yeah. Anyone who has known me at all, or read any of my interviews, knows that my family has been my biggest supporter. My family is the biggest thing in my entire life. We've been a unit, always. That was one of the things I gravitated towards when I read the book. This isn't a love story, a love triangle, or a story about whether or not she wants to kiss that guy or the other guy. That's not what this is about. This is a love story between a brother and a sister who are fighting for each other to live, to survive, to exist. That's at the basis of this sci-fi story; it's a true human love story between members of a family.

Did you learn any new skills on this movie?

Actually, the funny thing with this movie is that usually I train so much, and am always learning something new. But then, on this film, I actually had to revoke everything I had been trained for, because I'm just a young girl who's a typical teenager with no training in anything. So, when I'm walking around with this big M16 [assault rifle] around my neck, my character would be afraid of it. So I need to fumble with it and not really know what I'm doing.

Did you like the fact that your character is just an ordinary girl?

Yeah, it's nice to [play] those ordinary characters. I mean, it's out of the realm of possibility as an audience member when you go in and see the superhero, or the girl who's amazing at this or that. It's just not realistic. None of us are that special. So it's nice to see a story about a young girl who we can all relate to — because that's who we are. As much as we want to say we're skilled in one skill-set, at the end of the day, if you're a 16-year-old kid in high school, the most you're worried about is your exams or whether or not you're going to pass your class. I often play the extraordinary teenager who is facing fantasy, so it is nice to play a character closer to home, honestly – someone who has some real human aspects to them. No matter how fantastical a character's situation can be, I like to know that I have been through some similar emotion, that I have been there and I have felt that. So, for me, that was a huge calling card when I read the book.

Have you turned down roles in big sci-fi adventures previously?

I have turned down roles in all kinds of genres. I don't specifically choose or not choose roles due to the genre; I go off of the character foremost and, secondly, the director. I believe that film is a director's medium, and if you don't have someone with a passion and interest, then the end result is never great. All the roles I choose to conquer typically have a strong message for women, and aren't ones that further outdated stereotypes.

Trust, or the lack thereof, is a key theme in the movie, right?

Oh, absolutely, Cassie is really affected by the fact that she can't really be sure who she can trust. Everyone she meets could be a potential threat. She would like to trust people but she soon learns that she is always betrayed or let down in some way. As a result, she learns that the only person she can trust is herself.

Do you think you'd act like Cassie in this situation?

You never know what you're going to be when that moment hits, but you obviously hope you're going to be the strong one leading the pack and saving everyone. You hope that you'll be able to be heroic, but sometimes you're just not that. You never know.

How did this career begin for you? You started when you were so young…

Yeah, I started when I was about six or seven years old. That's when I booked my first major motion picture. Basically, my brother went to the Professional Performing Arts School in New York City and I used to hear him rehearsing his monologues as a baby. I was, like, five years old. And I just started memorising them with auditory memorisation. And then I would start repeating them to everyone around me. And my family was like, 'Okay. You're weird!' [laughs] I just knew that I enjoyed pretending to be these other people. Eventually, I started auditioning and, within six months of that, we moved to L.A., though not for any professional reason. It was for a totally different reason. But we moved to LA and I booked my first movie within two months, which was *The Amityville Horror.* That was a huge thing to book at that age. So it was just a perfect storm. There was a lot of luck involved and a lot of working really hard. At that point in time, I would have at least three other young actresses who were a little bit older than me going for every single role. So I had to go into rooms and do 20 different auditions and cry on cue and work like crazy. But it built that tenacious fire in me that you have to have as a young actor.

This seems to be a good time for young female actors in the movie industry. There is more choice, perhaps, than there used to be…

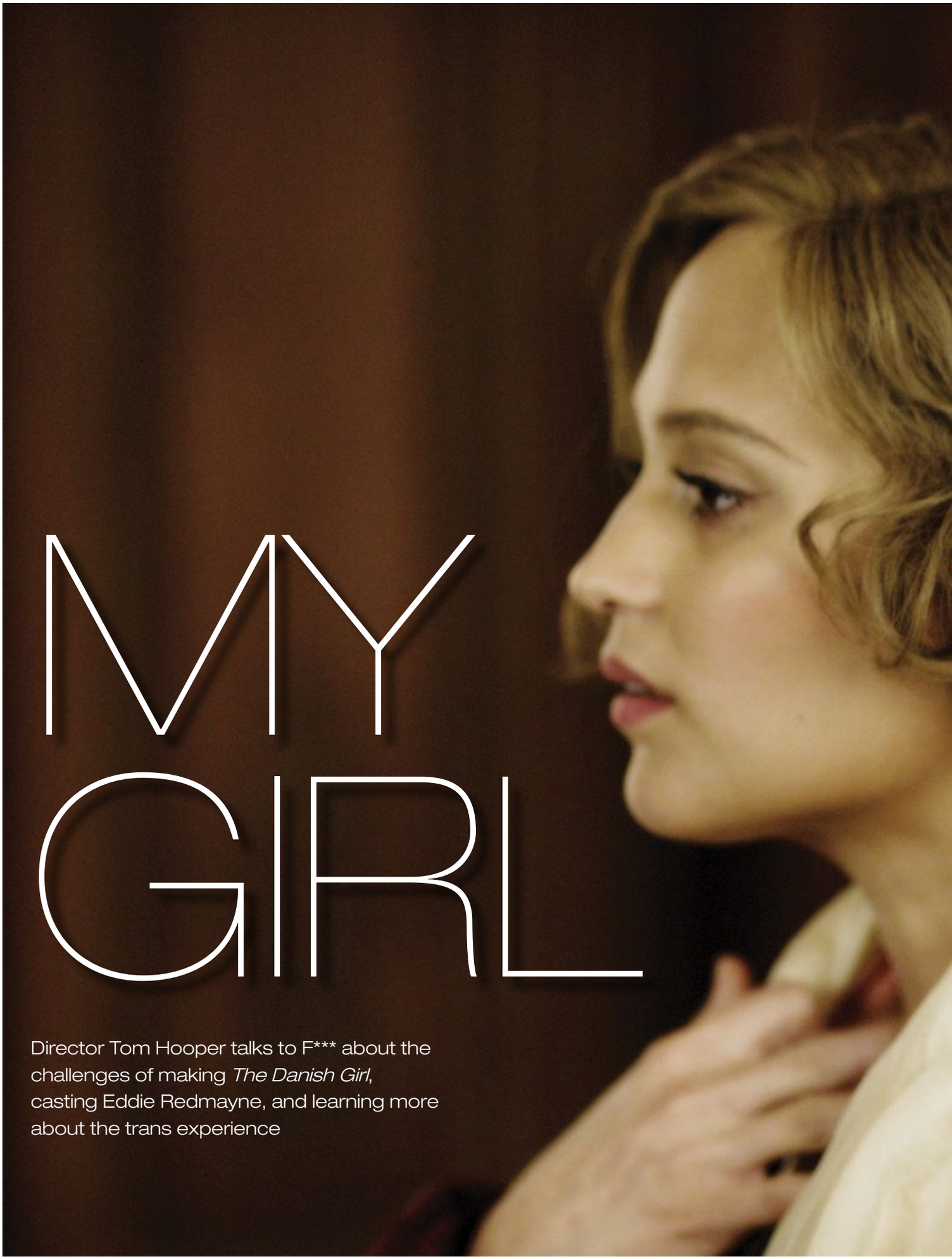
Yes, it's nice to be able to be an 18-year-old girl right now in this industry, because I don't have to cower down and just play the damsel in distress and let everyone save me. I can actually be the one running through the forest, saving my brother, saving my family, trying to piece it all back together, because that's what women are. That's who we are — we persevere and we don't say, 'No!' I grew up with four older brothers. I was always the girl in the family and I grew up fighting back against that stereotype and I think that finally we have a voice to show that.

Have you seen a change in the kind of roles that are being made available to you?

That is an interesting question. I was talking about it with my friend's family recently. I get offered everything from the girl-next-door, to the best friend, to the mean girl, and even the strong, no-nonsense action hero. While I do see a nice shift in roles being written for young women, I don't always see those films get financed and made. I try and search out the most interesting roles and stories for my characters, and then champion those to be produced. If I come on board a project that seems to be halfway there for [my character], then I fight to have 'her' rounded out and realised as best as I can.

The 5th Wave opens on 14 January 2016.





MY GIRL

Director Tom Hooper talks to F*** about the challenges of making *The Danish Girl*, casting Eddie Redmayne, and learning more about the trans experience









Does each film you work on change you, and did this film change you at all?

I think it changed me in terms of the huge journey I've undergone when it comes to gaining an understanding of trans experience and the transgender community. I first fell in love with the script when I hadn't been on this journey, so I think that's been a very enriching and rewarding journey.

Let's set the scene. Tell us about Lili and Gerda and how this story came to you initially.

Well, it all started with falling in love with a great script. I cannot tell you how rare it is to come across great scripts that haven't been made. I mean, there are years in which I read 50, 60 scripts and struggle to find one that I really wanted to make. This probably remains one of the best first-draft scripts I've ever read, and I fell in love with it. It made me cry and. because it moved me so much, I was drawn to making it. It's a love story about a young couple, both artists living in Copenhagen in the '20s, who deal with the dawning realisation on the part of the husband that she's a woman inside. It's a portrait of a marriage going through this profound change, where love mediates the change throughout.

It's hard to imagine the courage that Lili had in undergoing that transition – because we're talking about something that took place almost 100 years ago, aren't we?

Yes, I was thinking that we're at the Venice Film Festival, which is in its 72nd year. And this operation happened just before then, just before the Venice Film Festival started, which gives you some sense of the time scale. I mean, even making the movie was hard. It was hard to explain to people how dangerous the operations were, because you can't have a character saying, 'It's a dangerous operation, antibiotics haven't been invented yet'. But yes, it's a world before these brilliant defences against infection were invented, and so the risk of death was incredibly high and the surgery was pioneering and experimental. So I think what's also come across in my seven years living with this story is the incredible courage of Lili Elbe and, also, you get some sense of how in pain she must have been living as Einar to take those risks to become her true self.

Was one of your challenges in making a film like this that you mustn't impose modern perceptions on a story that's almost 100 years old?

Absolutely, I remember one thing we talked about a lot, which was that Lili sometimes talks about Einar and Lili as if they're two



different people. This comes from the memoir that Lili published after her death, in which she talks about Lili and Einar in the third person. The more I thought about it, the more I thought: the word 'transgender' doesn't exist; there's no kind of language to support it, so maybe she was making sense of it by saying: 'I have a woman inside me, yet am a man on the outside, and these two selves are in this battle and the woman must come out and must be the winner because otherwise I'm going to not be able to keep living'. That was interesting, because I was aware that there was an instinct to change this language because it didn't match a modern trans experience. But, in the end, one had to respect the diaries of the actual person and think, well, that's the language she found to talk about it so we should respect that.

We need to talk about your two leads. You've worked with Eddie Redmayne before. Why was he always your first choice for the role of Lili?

Yes, from the first time I read the script, I had a very strong instinct that Eddie was the right person to cast. I was very open to many different routes, but that instinct remained strong with me throughout the process. It's a combination of having worked with him before – you know, I worked with him when he was 22 years old on *Elizabeth*, and he gave the most astonishing performance in a scene where he was sentenced to death for rebelling against the Queen. We then did *Les Mis* together, in which his performance of *Empty Chairs At Empty Tables* remains one of the highlights of that movie, for me, against some pretty great opposition. There's something in Eddie that's drawn to the feminine that I was intrigued by. You know he's played female roles before. In Mark Rylance's *Twelfth Night*, he played Viola, so I thought he might be interested in going into that further and more comprehensively. I slipped him the script on the barricades of *Les Mis* at Pinewood Studios and, like me, he fell in love with the script.

Tell us about working with Alicia Vikander.

Alicia, I haven't known for as many years as Eddie, but I mean there was a succession of great movies she did: *A Royal Affair*, *Anna Karenina*, *Ex Machina*, and I think she's one of the emerging greats. She's got a huge career ahead of her. I love her energy, I love her great big heart, I love her passion and I love her for being Scandinavian and not uptight and British!

The Danish Girl opens on 7 January 2016.



*** R(A)

REVIEWS ANONYMOUS

BONE TOMAHAWK

BY THE SEA

IN THE HEART OF THE SEA

KRAMPUS

LOVE THE COOPERS

POINT BREAK

REGRESSION

THE PEANUTS MOVIE

And more...

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BONE TOMAHAWK

RATING ★★★☆☆

Genre: Horror/Western **Rating**: R21 (Violence) **Run Time**: 133 mins **Director**: S. Craig Zahler **Cast**: Kurt Russell, Patrick Wilson, Matthew Fox, Richard Jenkins, Lili Simmons, David Arquette, Sid Haig **Opens**: 10 December 2015







Gun-slinging outlaws are far from the only terrors a small-town sheriff needs to fend off in this horror western. Sheriff Franklin Hunt (Russell) of the frontier town Bright Hope leads a party in search of Samantha O'Dwyer (Simmons) and young Deputy Nick (Evan Jonigkeit). Samantha and Nick have been kidnapped by savage troglodytes, cave-dwelling humanoid creatures who feed on people. The party comprises Arthur O'Dwyer (Wilson), Samantha's husband who is nursing a broken leg; the dapper sharpshooter John Brooder (Fox); and elderly "back-up Deputy" Chicory (Jenkins). It turns out that bandits Purvis (Arquette) and Buddy (Haig) have incurred the wrath of the brutal troglodytes by desecrating their burial grounds. With one member of their group already wounded and two of them elderly men, it seems the odds are stacked against Sheriff Hunt and his gang.

Bone Tomahawk is the directorial debut of multi-hyphenate S. Craig Zahler, a novelist, screenwriter, musician and cinematographer. Zahler's noir western novels have garnered him considerable acclaim, and it is clear from *Bone Tomahawk* that he has an affinity for the genre. The film is an old-fashioned western that segues into graphic, gory horror and it's quite clear that this is intended to become a cult classic, to be screened mostly at film festivals to discerning audiences. As such, its appeal is very limited and this is obviously intended for a niche market, at the risk of alienating anyone else. The film has been described as a "slow burn", but one man's slow burn is another man's slog. Indeed, *Bone Tomahawk* meanders and dawdles, with not very much happening until its final half-hour. We get non-sequitur conversations about how one would read a book in the bath without getting the pages wet and the minutiae of flea circuses, which are intended to provide texture but come off as pointless instead.

Thankfully, Zahler has wrangled an excellent cast and the characters embody familiar genre tropes without being one-note caricatures, which is difficult to do in a genre piece. Russell, as expected, seems perfectly at home in the setting and brings an authority to his sheriff role without overplaying the macho man aspect. He gets to kick ass, but the film wisely avoids indulging in cheeky references to Russell's iconic past roles. For an actor of his iconic status, this is quite a small project to headline and Russell was drawn to the part as an early supporter of Zahler's novels. We'll next see Russell in a western again really soon, in the form of Quentin Tarantino's *Hateful Eight*.

Wilson can sometimes be bland, but he fits the everyman O'Dwyer, and while the character seems set up as a bit of a milksop, he comes into his own and has us rooting for him to rescue his wife and survive this ordeal. Jenkins is on hand to provide most of the comic relief as the doddering old Chicory, but he is careful not to play the part too broadly. Fox rocks a beautifully tailored turn-of-the-century suit as the dashing, boastful rogue, though there are times when he doesn't convincingly seem like someone from that time period. The same goes for Simmons, who comes off as a little too modern for a frontierswoman. She gets to perform a somewhat gratuitous sex scene with Wilson but is ultimately little more than the stock damsel-in-distress whom the valiant men have to venture into the unknown to rescue. She's a doctor, so that counts for something, we suppose.

Bone Tomahawk is somewhat hampered by its limited budget, the town of Bright Hope obviously standing on a backlot that's been used in countless westerns before. While the film presents us with well-drawn characters portrayed by some talented actors, it lacks a crucial forward momentum and the flabby mid-section is almost entirely devoid of urgency. The ending in particular packs in grisly scenes designed for maximum stomach-turning effect, but more impatient viewers are likely to grow restless before then. The smaller production gives Zahler the freedom to try many things that big studios would've forbidden him from doing and the most positive thing that can be said about the enterprise is that, well, it's different.

Summary: Kurt Russell's strong performance gives this hybrid western/slasher flick some weight and gore-hounds might be pleased with the gruesome third act, but *Bone Tomahawk* is ultimately too slow and too spare to be a truly riveting genre offering.

Jedd Jong

BY THE SEA

RATING ★½☆☆☆

Genre: Drama **Run Time**: 132 mins **Rating**: M18 (Sexual Scenes and Nudity) **Director**: Angelina Jolie Pitt
Cast: Angelina Jolie Pitt, Brad Pitt, Mélanie Laurent, Melvil Poupaud, Niels Arestrup **Opens**: 31 December 2015







Brangelina are back together on the big screen for the first time in ten years, after continuously teasing – or threatening, depending on your point of view – the possibility of doing a movie as a couple again. Alas, it's not *Mr. & Mrs. Smith 2: Little Smiths*, but a romantic drama instead. It is the mid-1970s, and Roland (Pitt) and his wife Vanessa (Jolie) are holidaying in a French seaside town. Roland is a struggling writer and Vanessa is a former dancer. After 14 years of marriage, the couple have grown apart. In the hotel room next to theirs, newlyweds Francois (Poupaud) and Lea (Laurent) are having their honeymoon. Vanessa becomes envious of their wedded bliss as both she and Roland become increasingly frustrated with each other, unable to work things out. The fairy-tale setting's there; now all they need is that happily-ever-after.

Jolie is *By The Sea*'s writer and director and, alongside her husband, its star. There's no point denying this isn't a vanity project; it's pretty much the dictionary definition of one. The foremost task any vanity project has to accomplish is that of convincing the audience that there's a point or at least some semblance of value to the enterprise beyond a vigorous ego massage. There's not even the faintest attempt at such justification here. The film has already been roundly savaged by critics, so excuse us for picking at its carcass. Jolie and Pitt are movie stars and, where movie stars go, their egos are wont to follow. An ego is not necessarily a bad thing; some might say it's an integral ingredient in the "star quality" cocktail. What Jolie and Pitt have done here is assume that the very notion of the two of them on screen is enough to send audiences into a tizzy, and that there doesn't need to be anything more than that. It's ShamWow levels of self-absorption.

Yes, *By The Sea* is pretty to look at. Then again, most people would like to have Christian Berger or a cinematographer of his calibre film their honeymoon in Malta as a keepsake if given a chance. Then again, most people wouldn't foist it upon the movie-going public under the assumption that anyone other than themselves would want to watch it. There's a good deal of style, with Jolie going for a '70s-type laid-back romance vibe. The climate may be Mediterranean, but the pace is glacial, with very little actually happening over the course of the film's 132-minute duration. There is meant to be a sense of mystery as to why exactly Roland and Vanessa are so unhappy, with fleeting, initially indiscernible flashes serving as clues to what that is. When the root of the couple's discontent is finally revealed, it comes across as little more than contrived and clichéd.

Both Jolie and Pitt are talented and have delivered entertaining performances before, but their delusions of arthouse-ness do them no favours. When we first meet these characters, they're charmless, and they pretty much stay that way right up until just before the very end, *maybe*. In her third film as director, Jolie has yet to find a distinct voice. That wild-child streak, the fiery unpredictability and the brazen sexuality – qualities that made her such a magnet for fascination in the beginning of her career – are all but absent here. We have to make do with traces of it. The frank nudity in the film, including from Jolie, appears to be an attempt at honesty and intimacy, embracing a more European sensibility instead of mass-market Hollywood prudishness, but it is largely superficial. With the sun-hats and the sunglasses, Jolie does pull off the classic Sophia Loren thing. There's the feeling that this would work a lot better as a photo spread in a magazine than with any attempt at a plot tacked onto it.

Jolie and Pitt leave little room for the supporting players, but they aren't bad. Poupaud and Laurent are the frisky younger couple, whom Vanessa and Roland voyeuristically observe through a peep-hole in the wall of their room. It's a decent idea, one of a yearning for blissful days past, but because there's so little to Roland and Vanessa and even less to Francois and Lea, it's difficult to be affected by the sentiment. There are traits of an erotic thriller creeping into the film at times but, in Jolie's attempt to be as tastefully arty as possible in the film's depiction of sex, the film avoids straight-up appealing to any base instincts. Veteran French actor Niels Arestrup is wholly believable as Michel, the aging restaurant proprietor who is mourning the recent death of his wife, but his dialogue contains little more than vague aphorisms about marriage.

By The Sea may boast the wattage of a Hollywood mega-star couple and it might have an air of class about it, but when it comes down to it, this film is a great deal like those Adam Sandler movies that he's admitted are basically paid vacations. Believe it or not, Jolie and Pitt were not the only things that made *Mr. & Mrs. Smith* enjoyable. It was a tongue-in-cheek action comedy that was buoyed by their undeniable chemistry and boosted by the swirling rumours of romance on the set – rumours that were soon confirmed. Ten years on, now that the pair are officially married, it's not scandalous or even particularly romantic, just moderately aggravating. It's odd, but seeing Jolie and Pitt in a relationship that has lost most of its spark is even more cloying and cringe-inducing than seeing them all lovey-dovey.

Summary: Spectacularly self-indulgent and utterly pointless, *By The Sea* is ample proof that a real-life relationship alone is a very flimsy foundation on which to build a romantic movie.

Jedd Jong

IN THE HEART OF THE SEA

RATING ★★★☆☆

Genre: Action/Adventure/Drama **Rating**: PG13 (Some Disturbing Scenes) **Run Time**: 121 mins **Director**: Ron Howard
Cast: Chris Hemsworth, Benjamin Walker, Tom Holland, Cillian Murphy, Ben Whishaw, Brendan Gleeson, Michelle Fairley **Opens**: 3 December 2015







Pull up a chair, because director Ron Howard's got a whale of a tale to tell you lads, a whale of a tale or two. Author Herman Melville (Whishaw) travels to Nantucket Island, Massachusetts, to interview innkeeper Thomas Nickerson (Gleeson), in order to research the novel *Moby-Dick*. At age 14, Nickerson (Holland) was a cabin boy aboard the whaleship Essex, sailing with Captain George Pollard, Jr. (Walker), First Mate Owen Chase (Hemsworth) and Second Mate Matthew Joy (Murphy). It is the year 1820, and whale blubber is a valuable commodity for its use as fuel. While off the South American coast, the *Essex* is rammed by a bull sperm whale and sinks, stranding its crew at sea. Nickerson recounts the harrowing events to Melville, confronting dark memories of starvation, madness and survival, during which the crew drew lots to determine who would be killed and eaten for the others to live.

In The Heart Of The Sea is based on Nathaniel Philbrick's 2000 non-fiction book of the same name. The film was originally set for release in March this year, but was pushed back to December, presumably for awards season consideration. The true story seems like it has all the makings of a gripping film but, while the end result is competently executed, it fails to be truly thrilling or moving. By now, audiences know what to expect from a survival-at-sea drama – the elements will be braved, there will be desperate situations, the crew will be at each other's throats, the survivors will have to band together to stay alive and so on. *In The Heart Of The Sea* hopes to offer something different in the form of the whale, but there is very little of the film in which the crew of the Essex actually face off against their cetacean nemesis.

This is a film about extremes that often plays it very safe, even with the depiction of cannibalism. There are times when *In The Heart Of The Sea* comes across like it's trying to emulate a prestigious British costume-drama epic and, while effort is made to capture the whaleship setting and time period, the film never quite attains the desired level of authenticity. Because of the way the framing device is set up, with the middle-aged Nickerson reluctantly telling Melville about the events he braved in his youth aboard the Essex, there is a significant amount of exposition. It feels like we have to wade through the history to get to the exciting bits, as opposed to being actually invested in these characters and caring about what happens to them.

The cast take the material very seriously and, while this is not a poorly acted film, there isn't quite enough personality to each of the historical figures. There is conflict between Captain George Pollard, Jr. and First Mate Owen Chase, because Chase was promised the captaincy but Pollard got the position through his family connections. The two men eventually come to an understanding but, given the circumstances, their interaction should be more riveting than this. Hemsworth, reuniting with his *Rush* director, famously went on a diet of 500 calories a day to portray the starving sailor. Bidding farewell to all that muscle must be like sending a first-born child off to college. Hemsworth's Chase is the hero who looks out for his men, a very straightforward role. Walker is often quite bland opposite him and, even though he's playing the captain, there are moments when this reviewer almost forgot he existed.

Murphy's usual magnetism and subtle unpredictability are all but absent from his turn as Second Mate Matthew Joy and, given how the story is told from Nickerson's point of view, we expected Holland to be given more emotional beats to play. The sequence in which the Essex goes down in flames after it is struck by the enraged whale is excitingly staged, but most of the drama is predictable and the film stops short of being truly immersive. There are also scenes depicting baby whales in the pod, and one can't help but side with the whales at times. Sure, the whalers are doing their job and we don't meant to get all Greenpeace, but at the end of the day, this is a movie in which our heroes are killing animals that wouldn't bother them if they didn't get all up in their business. This reviewer never really felt like he was stranded alongside the crew of the Essex, and the detachedness is what ultimately lets *In The Heart Of The Sea* down.

Summary: What should be an epic adventure is mostly dull and doesn't offer anything drastically different from other survival-at-sea films.

Jedd Jong

KRAMPUS

RATING ★★½☆☆

Genre: Horror/Comedy **Run Time**: 98 mins **Rating**: PG13 (Frightening Scenes) **Director**: Michael Dougherty **Cast**: Adam Scott, Toni Collette, Allison Tolman, David Koechner, Emjay Anthony, Stefania LaVie Owen, Conchata Ferrell, Krista Stadler **Opens**: 3 December 2015









This Christmas, the weather outside is far from the only thing that's frightful. Tommy (Scott) and Sarah Engel (Collette), along with their children, Max (Anthony) and Beth (Owen), are gearing up for the annual torture that is their relatives visiting for Christmas. Sarah's sister, Linda (Tolman), arrives with her husband Howard (Koechner), their four children and Aunt Dorothy (Ferrell) in tow. They're stuck inside with no electricity due to a ferocious blizzard. Tommy's mother (Stadler) begins acting strangely, as she usually does around Christmas, and soon the family is terrorised by some particularly nasty uninvited guests. It turns out that Max has inadvertently summoned the Christmas demon, Krampus – Santa Claus' evil counterpart – and good cheer is not on the agenda.

Krampus, the cloaked, horned figure from Germanic folklore who punishes misbehaving children during Christmas, has only recently entered American popular culture. Krampus seems like a natural antagonist for a film of the holiday horror sub-genre, and we're getting two this festive season, the other one being a Canadian anthology movie called *A Christmas Horror Story*. Michael Dougherty, who helmed acclaimed cult anthology horror film *Trick 'r Treat*, wrote and directed *Krampus*. While he does ensure the film is tonally consistent and doesn't stray too far into campiness, *Krampus* is far from the hearty Christmas meal horror fans have been hoping it would be.

The Krampus mythology is one that most American audiences wouldn't be familiar with, and the inclusion of a slightly creepy German grandmother figure hints that the film will dive headlong into the trove of tales surrounding this dark anti-Santa. We do get a haunting animated flashback sequence, but there is very little that makes Krampus and his minions stand out from being run-of-the-mill horror-movie monsters. There are some fantastic creature effects furnished by Weta Workshop but, apart from CGI gingerbread men attacking David Koechner with a nail gun, there aren't any particularly inventive set-pieces to be had. The justification that is given for Krampus selecting this particular family as his target is quite flimsy, and the moral of treasuring one's relatives in spite of how annoying they might be comes off as half-hearted. The film's scathing opening sequence is set to Bing Crosby's *It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas* and depicts crowds violently jostling each other in a frenzy while Christmas shopping at a mall. It suggests a bitter satirical edge which is not followed up on.

Scott and Collette play it straight, and their steadfastness in refusing to wink and nod at the audience does help the material. Anthony, memorably lovable as Jon Favreau's on-screen son in *Chef*, is a convincingly earnest good kid. While none of the performances is terrible, everyone here is a family comedy cliché: we have the harried mother who has to hold the fort when the relatives descend on her home; the teenage daughter who is never more than a minute away from rolling her eyes; the boorish uncle; and the belligerent, alcoholic grandaunt. Austrian actress Krista Stadler does lend the film some texture, keeping "Omi" from being a full-on "creepy grandma" type a la *The Visit*.

The first half of *Krampus* has dysfunctional family members squabbling, the second half has said family members chased through the house by an assortment of Christmas-themed monsters and the ending is vague at best, a howl-worthy cop-out at worst. The Krampus legend has all the makings of a terrific horror flick, showcasing the dark side of a holiday that's associated with commercialised cheeriness. There are some effective atmospheric touches, such as the incorporation of the already-kinda creepy *Carol Of The Bells* into the soundtrack. At times, the film almost feels like it could be something in the vein of *Gremlins*, though it lacks the demented energy to reach that level. Unfortunately, *Krampus* doesn't make optimal use of the legend and its PG-13 rating does somewhat hamper the scares it can provide.

Summary: There's talent behind this horror comedy, but the rich, fascinatingly spooky Krampus legend is left largely unmined.

Jedd Jong

LOVE THE COOPERS

RATING ★★☆☆☆

Genre: Comedy **Run Time**: 107 mins **Rating**: PG13 (Some Sexual References) **Director**: Jessie Nelson **Cast**: Alan Arkin, John Goodman, Diane Keaton, Amanda Seyfried, Ed Helms, Anthony Mackie, June Squibb, Marisa Tomei, Olivia Wilde, Jake Lacy, Steve Martin **Opens**: 3 December 2015









Family reunions are often occasions when grinning and bearing it is the order of the day. This Christmas comedy-drama follows four generations of the Cooper clan as they reunite to celebrate Christmas as one big, not-so-happy family. Sam (Goodman) and Charlotte (Keaton) have been married for 40 years but are on the brink of calling it quits, both reluctantly agreeing to put on a brave front for everyone coming over. Their son, Hank (Helms), is recently divorced from Angie (Borstein) and is looking for a job, having to provide for his kids Charlie (Timothée Chalamet), Madison (Blake Baumgartner) and Bo (Maxwell Simkins). Hank's sister, Eleanor (Wilde), a struggling playwright, meets military man Joe (Lacy) at an airport bar and they kind of hit it off. Meanwhile, Charlotte's sister, Emma (Tomei), gets arrested for shoplifting by Officer Percy Williams (Mackie). Grandpa Bucky (Arkin) befriends diner waitress Ruby (Seyfried). Christmas dinner doesn't go according to plan, as a series of events unfolds – events that could drive the family further apart or bring them together in the spirit of the holiday.

Every Chinese New Year, we get star-studded comedies like *All's Well That Ends Well*, with posters that have Andy Lau, Chow Yun Fatt, Cecilia Cheung or Carina Lau grinning and holding their chopsticks up in the air. Well, Hollywood has movies like *Love The Coopers*. This is the kind of film that one can bring Grandpa and Grandma to during the holidays and it's meant to please everyone, naturally pleasing nobody in the process. The goings-on are at once mundane and over-the-top, with the Coopers depicted as dysfunctional in a relatively pedestrian manner. Before everyone gets together a little after the halfway mark, the film flits from character to character, stringing the vignettes together. Every line of screenwriter Steven Rogers' dialogue sounds like stock romantic comedy-drama drivel and it's altogether very cloying and syrupy. There are attempts to temper this with some cynicism, but it seems like Rogers and director Jessie Nelson are constantly asking themselves, "We can be a little bitter here without alienating all the grandparents, right?".

We're going to dust off that old chestnut one hears whenever there's a movie that entirely wastes the collective talents of its cast: "Imagine what Robert Altman could do with these actors." Indeed, the collective wattage of the star power could eclipse even the Star of Bethlehem itself. *Love The Coopers* manages to be tolerable in the slightest because many of the actors are innately watchable, Goodman in particular. While he and Keaton are believable as a squabbling elderly married couple, the material is still very rote. At one point, Sam even asks Charlotte, "What happened to us?". Excuse us if we can't gather up the sympathy. There are flashbacks to every single character when they were kids and it feels more like a cheap heartstring pull than a worthwhile storytelling device.

Wilde and Lacy have decent chemistry and there is a degree of development to their relationship, even though it is heavy on the "Oh, he's a Republican and she's a Democrat!" jokes. Tomei is shrill, and casting the usually engaging Mackie as a stoic police officer and the token black guy is a crying shame. Arkin mopes about and looks sad a bunch with Seyfried playing opposite him as the diner waitress anyone would have a crush on. There are hints of romance in their interaction, which, given the 52-year age difference, is creepy in spite of both actors' best efforts. Helms is pretty much a non-entity and Squibb is the doddering senile aunt whose dementia is played for laughs. While nobody is sleepwalking through the movie *per se*, it's obvious that *Love The Coopers* demands precious little from its cast, literally half of whom have won or been nominated for Oscars.

While *Love The Coopers* isn't an insufferable gag-heavy Christmas comedy in the *Deck The Halls* mould, it still provides plenty of cringeworthy moments. All of this is tied together by painfully on-the-nose narration by Steve Martin, with an end reveal as to the mystery narrator's true identity that is worthy of an almighty eye-roll. This isn't one of those films that's joy and cheer from start to finish, and it does take stabs at drama, albeit very ham-fisted ones. Make no mistake, with the fluffy St. Bernard and the adorable moppet granddaughter, this is still engineered to have a maximum "aww" factor, and that's going to make a significant portion of the audience throw up in their mouths a little. It's not even cheesy and corny in an endearing, old-fashioned manner. *LoveTthe Coopers* oozes insincerity and sitting through it ends up being quite like being forced to spend the holidays with relatives you're not entirely fond of.

Summary: A monumentally talented cast by any standard is entirely squandered in this schmaltzy holiday flick, which repeatedly attempts to trick us into thinking it's making wise observations about family.

Jedd Jong

MR. UNBELIEVABLE

RATING ★★★★½

Genre: Comedy **Rating**: TBA **Run Time**: 93 mins **Director**: Ong Kuo Sin **Cast**: Chen Tian Wen, Liu Ling Ling, Marcus Chin, Roy Li Fei Hui, Jaime Teo, Tosh Zhang **Opens**: 3 December 2015







This reviewer was not in Singapore when Chen Tian Wen's *Unbelievable* first took the Internet by storm earlier this year, but heard all about it anyway courtesy of his 9GAG-surfing Brazilian housemate. Where countless Singapore Days and beauty-pageant national costumes had failed, a silly song from a local sitcom succeeded: our island home finally made its mark on the global pop-cultural consciousness. Small wonder, then, that the powers-that-be in the local entertainment scene would seize the chance to milk the song for all it's worth by churning out a movie predictably titled *Mr. Unbelievable* to announce its provenance. But believe it or not, *Mr. Unbelievable* is actually a real riot to watch, with none of the heavy-handedness or self-conscious posturing that has cramped the style of so many local comedies. In fact, it's so unabashedly silly that you'll be laughing at all the lame puns and clichéd scenarios in spite of yourself.

Mr. Unbelievable chronicles the life journey of one Eric Kwek Hock Seng (Chen), who is literally the same age as Singapore and has the overblown sense of patriotic love to show for it. Brought up by his master and surrogate father Lo Man (Chin) in a *getai*-singing environment, Eric harbours lofty dreams of making it big as a language-transcending singing idol. When the government clamps down on the use of dialect in *getai* performances, Eric tries to convince his master to allow him and his fellow disciples, Ah Fei (Li) and Ah Hua (Teo), to sing one of his original compositions on stage instead. Said compositions feature traditional *getai*-style melodies, but grammatically sound (for the most part) lyrics in English instead of Hokkien or Cantonese. And just like that, a new unbelievable music genre is born.

Suffice it to say that Eric does some fairly unlikeable things in the movie and pretty much succeeds in pissing off all the other characters at one point or another. He makes mean comments about his girlfriend Man Li's (Liu) weight, and pokes fun at his protégé, Lawrence (Zhang), for being a calefare actor despite not having much of a career himself. It's only through Chen's nuanced portrayal that Eric still ends up garnering the audience's sympathy and support. Chen is campy and flamboyant in the frequently interspersed musical numbers, but appropriately sullen and morose in the more dramatic scenes. Both the goofy charm that was such an integral part of the original music video's success and the acting chops he displayed in *Ilo Ilo* are on full display here, and it's clear that Chen is enjoying his long-overdue moment in the sun with his first-ever lead role.

Capitalising on the considerable comedic talents of its lead actor and supporting cast, *Mr. Unbelievable* brings on the laughs in truckloads. Director Ong Kuo Sin was also the diabolical mastermind behind the original song, and his acute sense of the humorous utilises each cast member's strengths to maximum advantage. Industry veterans such as Chen, Liu and Chin are all consummate comedians, but there is a particular ease with which their *joie de vivre* is conveyed here that speaks volumes about the utter lack of pretentiousness in *Mr. Unbelievable*. Everything from the pseudo-action sequences to the plot twists is unbelievably (okay, okay, we'll stop doing that) cheesy and contrived, but precisely because the film doesn't pretend otherwise, all that cheesiness becomes part of its appeal instead.

Another big part of the film's appeal is undoubtedly the music. Chen's Eric Kwek has a few new English *getai* songs to sing, and they're just as hilarious and random as the original (if not quite as effortlessly catchy). While Liu doesn't belt out any tunes this time around, Chin does, with a sentimental Hokkien ballad that reminds everyone he isn't just a funnyman who frequently becomes the butt of his co-stars' jokes. The challenges faced by the *getai* scene in the wake of the government's anti-dialect crusade are also refreshingly depicted, and tying Eric's musical innovations in with a semi-buried phenomenon in Singapore's past gives the film an unexpected gravitas. It's pretty unorthodox to lump a celebration of musical heritage together with a basket of lowbrow laughs, but somehow it works, just as the contrasting linguistic and musical traditions in *Unbelievable* somehow won over the hearts of Singaporeans.

Summary: Blossoms like a flower. Guaranteed to make you stunned like vegetable.

Leslie Wong

POINT BREAK

RATING ★★☆☆☆

Genre: Action/Thriller **Run Time**: 114 mins **Rating**: NC-16 (Sexual Scene and Some Violence) **Director**: Ericson Core
Cast: Édgar Ramírez, Luke Bracey, Ray Winstone, Teresa Palmer, Delroy Lindo **Opens**: 3 December 2015







Strap in, buckle up, insert alternate ways of securing oneself here – because things are about to get XTREME! *guitar riff* Johnny Utah (Bracey) is an FBI agent-in-training and a former motocross rider who left the sport after a tragic accident in his youth. When a team of elite thrill-seekers pull off multiple heists around the world, targeting wealthy corporations, Utah proposes to his FBI instructor (Lindo) that he be allowed to investigate. Utah goes undercover, infiltrating the team and befriending its leader, Bodhi (Ramírez), who explains that the daredevil exploits are actually about honouring nature. Utah falls in love with one of the team's members, Samsara (Palmer), and British agent Angelo Pappas (Winstone) begins to doubt where Utah's loyalties lie. As Bodhi's gang pursues the ultimate rush, Utah is seduced back into the extreme sports world, but must put a stop to Bodhi's criminal activities before he reaches the point of no return.

Point Break is a remake of the 1991 film of the same name, which some would go so far as to call a classic. The original *Point Break* is by no means flawless, and certainly has its goofy moments, but its iconic status is well-deserved and the characters of Johnny Utah and Bodhi, as portrayed by Keanu Reeves and Patrick Swayze respectively, are certainly memorable. There's no use beating around the bush: a *Point Break* remake is unnecessary, and doubly so because we already have *The Fast And The Furious*, which swapped out surfing for underground street racing. It is a touch ironic that Ericson Core, the cinematographer of the first *Fast And Furious* movie, is the director and cinematographer of the *Point Break* remake. It could be argued that, if the characters had different names and this movie were called something other than *Point Break*, there would actually be less furore at it being a rip-off than there is now, given its 'official' status.

The original film revolved around surf culture and the remake ups the ante by throwing everything and the kitchen sink into it, showcasing feats of big-wave surfing, wingsuit flying, free-rock climbing, dirt-road motorcycling and sheer-face snowboarding. The film has roped in top real-life extreme sports athletes to perform the stunts and, granted, they do look impressive, but there is something very dated about this approach. It makes the film feel like a relic of the late '90s, when sporting events like the X Games were taking off and everything felt like a Mountain Dew commercial. The daredevil stunts are strung together with a plot device in which Bodhi is looking to complete the "Okami 8", a series of extreme sports trials. The film has a larger scope than the original, with filming taking place in Austria, Italy, Switzerland, France, Mexico, Venezuela, French Polynesia and India, but there are times when it feels more like a ginned-up *Amazing Race* than anything else.

It is interesting that audiences feel so protective over the characters of Johnny Utah and Bodhi, given that they've only been in one film, but it seems like it's sacrilege for any actors other than Reeves and Swayze to take on those roles. Gerard Butler was originally cast as Bodhi, but was replaced by Ramírez. While Ramírez brings some mystique to the role and tries his best to pull off the philosopher-warrior attitude embodied by Swayze, his interpretation of the character is far from sufficiently magnetic. Reeves isn't exactly an untouchable paradigm of acting talent and, from some angles, Bracey does sort of resemble Reeves. What he does is bring a heaping helping of whininess to the part. Similarly, Palmer is considerably more boring than Lori Petty was in the original. Gary Busey brought his trademark unhinged unpredictability to Pappas, while Winstone is the usual gruff English street tough he always is. Lindo is the stock authority figure, also doing very little. As a side-note, the film features some of the least convincing tattoos we've ever seen in a movie. Guess the stunt budget left the make-up department high and dry.

It's pretty obvious that the plot exists to string the stunts together, and it all comes across as very perfunctory and half-hearted. This is a movie that should naturally be flowing with adrenaline, but it often feels like it's just being shoved along. A *Point Break* remake was a terrible idea to begin with and, even with all the extreme sports bells and whistles in the world, there's no way this was going to be anything but a let-down. In the hands of screenwriter Kurt Wimmer, it's even more laughable than in the original film when Bodhi waxes faux-philosophical. Sure, the original *Point Break* was cheesy, but that was part of its charm. In place of that, we get a whole lot of going-through-the-motions, the end result mediocre rather than radical.

Summary: This remake boasts superbly executed stunts but is fully incapable of justifying its existence and, for a movie about extreme sports, is sorely lacking in energy. It's pretty blah, brah.

Jedd Jong

REGRESSION

RATING ★★☆☆☆

Genre: Thriller **Run Time**: 107 mins **Rating**: NC-16 (Sexual Scenes) **Director**: Alejandro Amenábar **Cast**: Ethan Hawke, Emma Watson, David Thewlis, Lothaire Bluteau, David Dencik, Aaron Ashmore **Opens**: 3 December 2015







Ethan Hawke is out to unearth diabolical secrets in a small town in this mystery thriller. Hawke plays Detective Bruce Kenner of Hoyer, Minnesota, who is investigating the case of John Gray (Dencik). Gray confesses that he sexually assaulted his daughter Angela (Watson), but has no recollection of it. It is 1990 and the wave of 'Satanic panic' sweeping America is at its height. Kenner begins to suspect that a devil-worshipping cult might have a hand in the case. Psychology professor Kenneth Raines (Thewlis) is called upon to perform 'regression hypnosis', a therapy intended to unlock repressed memories. Kenner goes to meet with Angela, clearly troubled and now under the care of Reverend Murray (Bluteau). Nobody is above suspicion, including Kenner's partner, Detective George Nesbitt (Ashmore). As Kenner becomes more preoccupied with the case, he is afflicted by horrifying nightmares – but are they just dreams or something far more sinister?

Regression is written and directed by Spanish filmmaker Alejandro Amenábar, whose best-known English-language film is the Nicole Kidman-starring supernatural thriller *The Others*. While gloomy, oppressive atmosphere abounds in *Regression*, actual thrills and scares are scarce. The film claims to be inspired by true events, but it's referencing the 'Satanic panic' of the '80s and early '90s in general rather than any specific case. During this period, many evangelical Christians were convinced that devil-worshipping, baby-sacrificing cults were operating right under their noses. *Regression* does that old dance of "maybe something supernatural is afoot, maybe it's all perfectly explainable", going around in circles until it reaches its predictable, unsatisfying reveal.

Hawke has repeatedly proven himself as a talented leading man, but the Bruce Kenner character is a bland protagonist, the likes of which we've seen many times before. He's basically every movie detective ever, yelling at suspects during interrogations, letting the case get under his skin, in danger of being consumed by his quest for the truth, etc. He doesn't seem to be very good at police work either: if leaping to conclusions were an Olympic sport, then Bruce Kenner would be a gold medallist. This is a movie in which the main character amounts to little more than a plot device.

Watson is the big draw here and, while she's certainly competent, she doesn't get very much to do either. Angela is the scared little girl, the weeping victim. Watson is believable as a small-town girl, affecting a convincing accent, but the question of whether Angela is a survivor of unspeakable trauma or is stringing everyone along failed to hook this reviewer's interest. There is a modicum of amusement to see Thewlis and Watson together on-screen, meaning it's a Hermione and Remus Lupin reunion. Hoyer is presented as a small town in which everyone is some degree of creepy, though nobody is memorably so. Even Dale Dickey's crazy cat-lady hysterics as Angela's grandmother, Rosie, fail to enliven the proceedings.

Regression partakes in a laundry list of horror clichés, including an obvious, heavy-handed score by Roque Baños, eerie visions of dagger-wielding hooded cultists in white make-up and a jump-scare-by-cat. At the same time, it very much wants to be taken seriously as a grim exposé of how mass paranoia can cloud perception. The hallucinogenic haze never wraps itself around the audience, the spooky misdirection pointless rather than intriguing. Amenábar tries his darnedest to sell the movie as a suspenseful mind-trip, but most viewers familiar with the genre won't be fooled for a second. Offering neither riveting tension nor all-out scares, *Regression* is dour and unsatisfying.

Summary: *Regression* is ominous in its atmosphere but obvious in its plotting, with lead actors Hawke and Watson unable to imbue it with any energy.

Jedd Jong

SNOOPY AND CHARLIE BROWN: THE PEANUTS MOVIE

RATING ★★★☆☆

Genre: CG Animation **Run Time**: 93 mins **Rating**: G **Director**: Steve Martino **Cast**: Noah Schnapp, Bill Melendez, Hadley Belle Miller, Alex Garfin, Noah Johnston, Francesca Angelucci Capaldi, Venus Omega Schultheis, Mariel Sheets, Kristin Chenoweth **Opens**: 10 December 2015







It's the great comeback movie, Charlie Brown! The *Peanuts* gang last graced the big screen in 1980's *Bon Voyage, Charlie Brown (And Don't Come Back!!)* and, in defiance of that title, Charlie Brown and friends are back indeed. Charlie Brown (Schnapp) has had a streak of bad luck, which he hopes to turn around when a new girl arrives in town. The Little Red-Haired Girl (Capaldi) quickly becomes the object of Charlie Brown's affections, and he goes about attempting to win her heart. In the meantime, Charlie Brown's dog, Snoopy (Melendez), finds a typewriter in a dumpster and begins writing a novel about his alter-ego, the World War I Flying Ace, who battles the Red Baron and falls for poodle pilot Fifi (Chenoweth).

The long-running *Peanuts* comic strip, created by Charles M. Schulz and running from 1950 to 2000, has occupied a beloved place in the American pop-culture consciousness. Naturally, many were nervous as to how a computer-animated feature film would fare, given the resolute old-fashioned nature of the strips and related media. Schulz's son Craig and grandson Bryan co-wrote the screenplay with Cornelius Uliano, ensuring that the film honours the family legacy. Director Steve Martino, who helmed earlier Blue Sky Animation projects *Horton Hears A Who!* and *Ice Age: Continental Drift*, retains the mood of the classic animated TV specials by sticking closely to the established designs of the characters. Their herky-jerky movement is an effective way of keeping the film from feeling too slick and modern, while little touches such as the subtle felt-like texture of Snoopy's fur add just enough detail.

The aesthetics and wholesome feel of the strip have been preserved, with the film carrying nary a hint of big studio interference about it, beyond the inclusion of a Meghan Trainor song. However, there's very little here that's capable of sustaining a feature film, even one that's just 93 minutes long. The *Peanuts* strips were never really rife with incident but, even so, the plot often feels too insubstantial. The most exciting moments of the film are the fantasy sequences in which Snoopy is a fighter pilot during World War I, harking back to the comic strip. These scenes feel superfluous and come off as little more than an attempt to pad things out. The personalities of all the characters do stick very close to those as established in the comic strip, but it seems like there's a lot more room for a greater breadth of interaction between the various members of the *Peanuts* gang. As it stands, the movie possesses insufficient narrative drive.

Another way in which the film sets itself apart from the bulk of Hollywood animated movies is that it doesn't boast a cast packed with marquee names. All the kids are actually voiced by child actors, Schnapp in particular capturing the underdog melancholy so crucial to Charlie Brown's enduring appeal. The late Bill Melendez, an animation icon who directed multiple *Peanuts* TV specials and films in addition to voicing Woodstock and Snoopy, voices the characters posthumously via archival recordings. Kristin Chenoweth is arguably the biggest name in the cast, providing the high-pitched yelps of Snoopy's fantasy love interest, Fifi. The film also preserves the tradition of having the voices of any adult characters, none of whom appear onscreen, rendered as indistinct "wah-wah" sounds, created by jazz trombonist Troy "Trombone Shorty" Andrews.

The animation in *The Peanuts Movie* hits the sweet spot and the film as a whole earnestly echoes a simpler, bygone era, which might be enough for some kids and their nostalgic parents or grandparents. However, this reviewer was left wanting more from the film. 'Hollow' isn't the right word, since it sounds so mean, and the film's simplicity can be very charming indeed, but there's just too little here to carry a feature film. If Vince Guaraldi's classic piano piece *Linus And Lucy*, wonderfully incorporated into Christophe Beck's score, instantly gives you the warm fuzzies, then *The Peanuts Movie* should pass muster.

Summary: While it's an adequate way to introduce the *Peanuts* gang to a whole new generation of kids, the story is too flimsy a foundation on which to build a feature film.

Jedd Jong

CAROL

Genre: Drama, Romance **Run Time**: 119 mins **Rating**: R21 (Homosexual Theme) **Director**: Todd Haynes **Cast**: Cate Blanchett, Rooney Mara, Kyle Chandler, Sarah Paulson, Jake Lacy **Opens**: 24 December 2015



These days, it's hard to be surprised by a love story in a film. We've seen endless permutations of romantic relationships – running the gamut from doomed to fated, blissful to tragic, underscored by varying degrees of love, lust and chemistry. There shouldn't even be much of a surprise to the love story that forms the heart and soul of *Carol* – anyone who walks into the cinema will know that this is The Movie In Which Cate Blanchett And Rooney Mara Play Lesbians. And yet, Todd Haynes' masterful, intoxicating film unfolds in a series of small, subtle surprises, culminating in one of the most profoundly affecting romances ever committed to film.

The film opens in New York, in the early 1950s. Christmas is right around the corner, and Therese (Mara) is working as a shopgirl in the toy section of a department store. She meets and serves dozens of people, but only one catches her eye: Carol (Blanchett), a poised, polished and seemingly perfect example of the many wives and mothers who frequent the store. On Therese's recommendation, Carol buys a model train set for her daughter Rindy: an unusual Christmas present for a little girl that swiftly draws a connection between the two women.

Over the next hour, *Carol* shades colour and complexity into the world in which Carol and Therese live. When they find each other again through a pair of gloves misplaced by accident (or, perhaps, design), the two women share lunch, and a tune played on a piano. Carol invites Therese to her family home and, eventually, on a road trip that changes everything. Therese confesses her love of photography, and begins to ask awkward questions of Richard (Jake Lacy), her devoted, if somewhat callous, boyfriend. Through it all, Carol's marriage to Harge (Kyle Chandler) crumbles apart, despite the fierce love they share for their daughter.

For much of its running time, Haynes' film – an adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's groundbreaking second novel, *The Price Of Salt* – unfolds at a deliberately unhurried pace that might alienate some, and bore others. Dramatic outbursts are kept to a bare minimum, chiefly coming from a raging Harge as he tries ever more desperately to cajole (or bully) Carol into remaining by his side. The growing tenderness between Carol and Therese deepens, not through flowery confessions of undying love, but in the exchanging of tentative glimpses, glances and smiles.

And yet, the heartbreaking magic woven throughout *Carol* comes from precisely these understated, measured moments. The aching, all-consuming affection between Carol and Therese blossoms in the film's pockets of silence, as they study each other in a mirror, or share a conspiratorial smile over breakfast. Threats of death and danger surface, but in purely emotional terms, resonating all the more powerfully for never being literal. Indeed, it's only when the film slips into its devastating final act – which simultaneously manages to warm hearts and shatter souls – that one begins to realise just how bewitching a spell *Carol* has cast in the silences and in-betweens.

To top it all off, there is so much at work in Phyllis Nagy's wonderfully spare script that *Carol* practically begs to be excavated, pored over and studied at length. The love story at its heart works because *Carol* is a film about two women who are making their way towards each other through a world that often refuses to understand, accept or acknowledge them: not just as potential lovers, but also as people.

RATING ★★★★½







While never flaunting its excellent feminist and queer credentials, the film surprises by shining a spotlight so firmly on its women and their relationships, including a powerful supporting turn by Sarah Paulson as Abby, Carol's best friend and erstwhile paramour. The stories of these women are the backbone, the meat, the heart, the soul and the entire central nervous system of *Carol*. As characters, they alternate between strong and weak, tough and tender, as they make choices and sacrifices – between heart and home, family and self – that women are still making today.

It seems profoundly unnecessary to say that *Carol*'s trump card is Blanchett. It should be self-evident, a given – after all, for as long as she has made movies, she has unquestionably been the best thing about any film she's in. And yet, she is completely transcendent here. In Blanchett's hands, Carol manages to be unearthly – an exalted goddess on a pedestal – and utterly, completely human at the same time. In a wonderfully layered final scene with Harge, Carol's controlled composure cracks apart, revealing the punishing depth of the pain she must undergo in order to be true to herself. Blanchett conveys it all with heartbreak to spare, radiating love, joy, misery or despair with barely perceptible changes in expression.

Mara, meanwhile, gives her finest performance to date, as a young woman teetering on the edge of becoming who she perhaps never realised she always wanted to be. Her Therese lingers quietly at the edges of her own life, not so much pushing limits as slipping past them to find her own way. It's hard to shake the feeling, though, that Mara remains outclassed by her co-star. Unlike Carol, Therese never completely coalesces as a character in her own right. To be fair to Mara, that's partly due to one of the script's few flaws. In a film that is otherwise so subtle and considered, we are too often told rather than shown that Carol finds Therese irresistible. (There is no such problem in believing that anyone could fall head over heels for Carol.)

Nevertheless, the chemistry between Blanchett and Mara burns, slowly but brightly. The electricity between them throws off more sparks as the film goes on – to the point that audiences will find their hearts stuttering and stopping at the tiniest of moments: when Carol presses her hand lightly on Therese's shoulder, or when their eyes meet, finally, across a crowded room.

In all of these elements, and in ways big and small, *Carol* constantly surprises. It could have been ripely melodramatic (in the style of Far From Heaven, Haynes' deliberately arch tribute to the films of Douglas Sirk); instead, it lingers in a key of melancholy realism. In another universe, Carol might have been more manipulative, Harge more villainous, Therese more coquettish, the love story less compelling and more titillating. The film's themes could have overwhelmed its central romance. And yet, in every gorgeous frame (composed with impeccable grace by cinematographer Edward Lachman), *Carol* sings of its love story: one that is as sweet as it is bitter, as simple as it is complex, and as real as it is magical.

Summary: A masterpiece that's tough, tender and thoughtful, anchored by a love story for the ages.

Shawne Wang

COOTIES



Opens: 10 Dec 2015 **Rating**: NC16 (Violence & Coarse Language) **Genre**: Action, Comedy, Horror **Director**: Jonathan Milott, Cary Murnion **Cast**: Elijah Wood, Rainn Wilson, Alison Pill, Morgan Lily

A mysterious virus hits an isolated elementary school, transforming the kids into a feral swarm of mass savages. An unlikely hero must lead a motley band of teachers in the fight of their lives.



GHOST THEATER

Opens: 10 Dec 2015 **Rating**: PG13 (Some Disturbing Scenes) **Genre**: Horror **Duration**: 99 mins **Language**: Japanese with English & Chinese Subtitles **Director**: Hideo Nakata **Cast**: Haruka Shimazaki, Rika Adachi, Riho Takada, Keita Machida

A young actress, Sara, who lands a leading role in a major play, soon encounters bitter rivalry amongst her fellow cast members, which escalates into all-out hatred. Strange things start happening at rehearsals and Sara begins to investigate a very real and menacing threat.

THE VANISHED MURDERER



Opens: 10 Dec 2015 **Genre**: Crime, Thriller **Duration**: 121 mins **Language**: Mandarin with English & Chinese subtitles **Director**: Lo Chi-leung **Cast**: Sean Lau Ching-wan, Gordon Lam, Jacqueline Li Xiaolu, Jiang Yiyan, Rhydian Vaughan

The sequel to 2012's *The Bullet Vanishes*, this movie follows a police inspector who chases an escaped female convict to a city filled with corruption and an unusually high suicide rate.



BEFORE WE GO

Opens: 17 Dec 2015 **Genre**: Comedy, Drama, Romance **Director**: Chris Evans **Cast**: Chris Evans, Alice Eve

A woman misses the 1:30 train from New York to Boston and a street musician spends the night trying to help her make it back home before her husband does. Throughout the night they learn a lot about one another and eventually find romance.

ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP



Opens 24 Dec 2015 **Genre**: Comedy **Director**: Walt Becker **Cast**: Justin Long, Matthew Gray Gubler, Jesse McCartney, Jason Lee, Bella Thorne, Kimberly Williams-Paisley, Tony Hale

Through a series of misunderstandings, Alvin, Simon and Theodore come to believe that Dave is going to propose to his new girlfriend in New York City, and dump them. They have three days to get to him and stop the proposal, saving themselves not only from losing Dave, but possibly from gaining a terrible stepbrother.



CAROL

Opens: 24 Dec 2015 **Genre**: Drama, Romance **Director**: Todd Haynes **Cast**: Cate Blanchett, Rooney Mara, Sarah Paulson, Kyle Chandler

Set in 1950s New York, a department-store clerk who dreams of a better life falls for an older, married woman.

IP MAN 3



Opens: 24 Dec 2015 **Genre**: Drama **Language**: Mandarin with English & Chinese subtitles **Director**: Wilson Ip Wai-shun **Cast**: Donnie Yen, Mike Tyson, Max Zhang Jin, Lynn Hung, Patrick Tam, Bryan Leung

Ip Man (Yen) takes on disciple, Bruce Lee, and engages in frequent sparring sessions to hone his skill after seeing great potential. Meanwhile, a well-known property developer-cum-street fighter (Tyson) challenges Ip Man in an incredible showdown of Wing Chun versus heavyweight boxing.



DADDY'S HOME

Opens: 31 Dec 2015 **Genre**: Comedy **Director**: Sean Anders, John Morris **Cast**: Will Ferrell, Mark Wahlberg, Linda Cardellini, Thomas Haden Church

A mild-mannered radio executive who strives to become the best stepdad to his wife's two children, but complications ensue when their freewheeling and freeloading real father arrives, forcing him to compete for the affection of the kids.

SKIPTRACE



Opens: 31 December 2015 **Genre**: Comedy, Drama **Director**: Renny Harlin **Cast**: Jackie Chan, Johnny Knoxville, Bingbing Fan, Eric Tsang, Michael Wong

A detective from Hong Kong teams up with an American gambler to battle against a notorious Chinese criminal.



SPOTLIGHT

Opens: 31 December 2015 **Genre**: Thriller **Director**: Thomas McCarthy **Cast**: Rachel McAdams, Mark Ruffalo, Michael Keaton, Liev Schrieber, Brian D'Arcy James, Stanley Tucci

Spotlight tells the true story of the Pulitzer Prize-winning Boston Globe investigation that would rock the city and cause a crisis in one of the world's oldest and most trusted religious institutions, the Catholic Church.

FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS



Opens: 7 Jan 2016 **Genre**: Drama **Director**: Gabriele Muccino **Cast**: Russell Crowe, Amanda Seyfried, Jane Fonda, Diane Kruger

A Pulitzer-winning writer grapples with being a widower and father after a mental breakdown, while, 27 years later, his grown-up daughter struggles to forge connections of her own.



LIFE

Opens: 7 Jan 2016 **Genre**: Biography, Drama **Director**: Anton Corbijn **Cast**: Robert Pattinson, Dane Dehaan, Peter Lucas, Lauren Gallagher

A photographer for Life Magazine is assigned to shoot pictures of James Dean.

MOJIN – THE LOST LEGEND



Opens: 7 Jan 2016 **Genre**: Adventure, Fantasy **Language**: Mandarin - subtitles to be advised **Director**: Wu Ershan **Cast**: Shu Qi, Angelababy, Chen Kun, Huang Bo, Ha Yu

While relishing retired civilian lives on the mean streets of New York City hawking goods, a shady client approaches a trio of ex-grave robbers. Before long, the three are raiding the secrets and treasures of ancient tombs in China, risking their friendship and even their lives on the tumultuous journey.



THE REVENANT

Opens: 7 Jan 2016 **Genre**: Action, Adventure **Director**: Alejandro González Iñárritu **Cast**: Leonardo DiCaprio, Tom Hardy, Will Poulter

Deep in the uncharted American wilderness, trapper Hugh Glass (DiCaprio) is severely injured and left for dead by a traitorous member of his team, John Fitzgerald (Hardy). With sheer will as his only weapon, Glass must navigate a hostile environment, a brutal winter, and warring Native American tribes in a quest to exact vengeance on Fitzgerald.

CONCUSSION



Opens: 14 Jan 2016 **Genre**: Drama, Sports **Director**: Peter Landesman **Cast**: Will Smith, Gugu Mbatha-Raw, Alec Baldwin

A look at how American football players suffer from major head injuries and life-long debilitating problems as a result of repeated concussions and efforts by the National Football League to deny it.



FRANNY

Opens: 14 Jan 2016 **Genre**: Drama **Director**: Andrew Renzi **Cast**: Dakota Fanning, Theo James, Richard Gere

A philanthropist meddles in the lives of newly-married couples in an attempt to relive his past.

OUR BRAND IS CRISIS



Opens: 14 Jan 2016 **Genre**: Comedy, Drama **Director**: David Gordon Green **Cast**: Sandra Bullock, Billy Bob Thornton

Failing badly in the polls, a Bolivian presidential candidate enlists the services of an American management team for help. The main star is "Calamity" Jane Bodine (Bullock), a brilliant strategist who comes out of self-imposed retirement for a chance to beat her professional nemesis, the loathsome Pat Candy - who is working for the opposition.



PORT OF CALL

Opens: 14 Jan 2016 **Genre**: Crime, Drama **Language**: Mandarin **Director**: Philip Yung **Cast**: Aaron Kwok, Jessie Li, Elaine Jin, Michael Ning, Patrick Tam

Based on a true event, this is a story about three people, a murder and dismemberment that happened in Hong Kong.

ROOM



Opens: 14 Jan 2016 **Genre**: Drama **Director**: Lenny Abrahamson **Cast**: Brie Larson, Joan Allen, William H. Macy

A modern-day story about the boundless love between mother and child; young Jack knows nothing of the world except for the single room in which he was born and raised.



13 HOURS: THE SECRET SOLDIERS OF BENGHAZI

Opens: 21 Jan 2016 **Genre**: Action, Drama, Thriller **Director**: Michael Bay **Cast**: John Krasinski, Pablo Schreiber, Toby Stephens

Based on actual events, this is the story of the six members of a security team who fought to defend the American diplomatic compound in Benghazi, after the attack of radical Islamist terrorists on September 11, 2012, the 11th anniversary of September 11, 2001 attacks.

MR SIX



Opens: 21 Jan 2016 **Genre**: Drama **Language**: Mandarin **Director**: Guan Hu **Cast**: Feng Xiaogang, Li Yifeng, Zhang Hanyu, Kris Wu, Xu Qing, Liu Hua, Liang Jing

An aging street punk, who is humiliated by a younger generation of gang members headed by the son of a powerful government official summons his old pals to pick one last fight.



STEVE JOBS

Opens: 21 Jan 2016 **Genre**: Biography, Drama **Director**: Danny Boyle **Cast**: Michael Fassbender, Kate Winslet, Seth Rogen

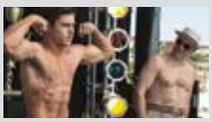
In this revealing film we explore the trials and triumphs of a modern day genius, the late CEO of Apple inc. Steven Paul Jobs.

THE HATEFUL EIGHT



Opens: 21 Jan 2016 **Genre**: Drama **Director**: Quentin Tarantino **Cast**: Samuel L. Jackson, Kurt Russell, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Channing Tatum, Walton Goggins, Tim Roth

In post-Civil War Wyoming, bounty hunters try to find shelter during a blizzard but get involved in a plot of betrayal and deception. Will they survive?



DIRTY GRANDPA

Opens: 28 Jan 2016 **Genre**: Comedy **Director**: Dan Mazer **Cast**: Zac Efron, Julianne Hough, Robert De Niro

Right before his wedding, an uptight guy is tricked into driving his grandfather, a perverted former Army general, to Florida for spring break

THE BIG SHORT



Opens: 28 Jan 2016 **Genre**: Drama **Director**: Adam McKay **Cast**: Christian Bale, Steve Carell, Ryan Gosling, Brad Pitt, Melissa Leo, Hamish Linklater, John Magaro, Rafe Spall, Jeremy Strong, Marisa Tomei, Finn Wittrock

When four outsiders saw what the big banks, media and government refused to, the global collapse of the economy, they had an idea: The Big Short. Their bold investment leads them into the dark underbelly of modern banking where they must question everyone and everything. Based on the true story and best-selling book by Michael Lewis



THE BOY

Opens: 28 Jan 2016 **Genre**: Drama, Thriller **Director**: Craig William Maacneill **Cast**: David Morse, Rainn Wilson, Jared Breeze, Aiden Lovekamp

An intimate portrait of a 9-year-old sociopath's growing fascination with death.



TRIALS AND TRIBU-LATIONS

Kaya Scodelario chats with F*** about reprising her role as Teresa in MAZE RUNNER: THE SCORCH TRIALS, a character whose mysterious past begins to unravel - to the detriment of her relationship with her fellow surviving Gladers

With the arrival of *Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials*, author James Dashner's legion of fans will not believe just how striking a vision director Wes Ball has crafted for this latest chapter. Already a global hit with film-goers, the franchise has grown in scope and in cast, but also in terms of its emotional pull. Universal themes will be found amidst the desolate rubble and terrifying creatures inhabiting "The Scorch". This is the lightning round of the *Maze Runner* saga and the returning ensemble could not wait to get a chance to make it come to life.

Britain's own Kaya Scodelario reprises her role as Teresa, whose mysterious past results in a devastating series of choices that threaten the stability of the surviving Gladers.

"I was very excited to get into Teresa exploring her own mind and instincts," Scodelario said. "She may or may not agree with Thomas. I wanted Teresa to separate from the others and explore what she would be making of this world. Teresa is very singular and alone. She's physically there but her mind is elsewhere. Her thought process is very different from the others. She doesn't really have anyone to share that with. It's been lonelier as an actor, but I like to play with that. Life isn't rainbows and fairy tales."

As the Gladers venture further into the unknown, they are fated to encounter more than just a ravaged landscape. Trust becomes a luxury that they can't afford to squander, adding an intriguing dimension to the group's journey.

The survivor's tale has continued to dominate in popular culture. Is that why stories like *The Maze Runner* resonate strongly with young people today?

We're in a generation of young people that have access to the world via the Internet. Someone living in L.A. can see a 16-year-old living in Iran and how different that is for them. We are fascinated and we're inspired by it. We see these wonderful young people across the world making a difference. They're doing things that, a few years ago, people felt we couldn't do. That we were just young people, that we don't have an opinion, that we can't make a difference. Now we're a lot more inspired by that and I think that's great.



How does *The Scorch Trials* reflect some of the surprising changes experienced by the group, particularly with regards to your character, Teresa?

It's wonderful. It's the reason I signed up to these movies in the first place, because I knew that she had this storyline and would make these decisions. It would be very easy to say that she's somewhat of the villain. I really don't agree with that. I think she's just looking at it from a different point of view and this is a group of people. They're not all going have the same ideas. They're not all going to have the same experience on this journey. Hers is very lonely and she's the only one dealing with the fact of having her memory return. She's not given a second to deal with that, you know? They're straight away on the run. I loved being able to play with that. I loved being quieter. I liked playing her just observing the world a lot more. That, to me, is such a great challenge, to have the audience ask, "Do I agree with her or not?" I'm really hoping that she'll get to say her piece in the third movie.

What have you learnt about yourself while working on this film?

Especially with this movie, I learned that I do enjoy being quiet and I enjoy observing. I'm trying to educate myself [to consider] every point of view in any situation. I try not to judge anything or anyone without knowing every side of the story and I've always kind of been like that. I've always been intrigued with the human psyche and I don't believe there's just good and bad. I think there's a lot more to it. Getting to play Teresa in this one I found really freeing. The first one was a lot of fun but, in this one, I kind of had to take my time a lot more and understand her loneliness, which is really scary. Especially for an actor, to admit that you're lonely or you're sad when you're around eight teenagers that are having a great time. But it was nice. It felt comfortable to be a bit lonely and sad sometimes on set.

Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials is now available on Blu-ray and Digital Download from Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment.

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MANEATER

Time and gravity seem to not work on Gong Li. We first laid eyes on her in 1987's *Red Sorghum* and, after more than 30 films over close to three decades, she's still blossoming.

In the upcoming sequel to the 2014 box office hit, *The Monkey King*, Li plays the White Boned Demon (*Baigujing*) – a shape-shifting spirit who attempts to seduce/trap monk Tang Sanzang, so that she can nourish herself with his flesh. Kinky business!

The Monkey King 2 opens in February 2016.


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